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On the Reading of Holy Scripture

Against the Extravagant and Impious Paradoxes of M. Mallet

DE LA LECTURE
DE
L'ÉCRITURE SAINTE
CONTRE
LES PARADOXES EXTRAVAGANTS ET IMPIES DE M. MALLET

Translated from French by Sonnet 4.6

Notice

This refutation of M. Mallet's most recent work was composed before his death. But although he is no longer in a position either to undertake his own justification against the excesses with which he is charged, or to profit from the warnings here given him, it has been judged proper to let it stand as it was first composed during his lifetime. For if he can no longer defend himself or retract his errors, he has furnished the public and the Sorbonne with guarantors who both can and ought to do so in his place. It is an established rule in the Faculty of Theology of Paris that the Approvers be held responsible for whatever is amiss in the books for which they have requested permission to grant their approval. M. Mallet's book was approved by four Doctors, counting the one who read it in order to obtain its privilege. Three of these four are, or have been, Professors of Theology in a School as celebrated as the Sorbonne, and as yet only one of them[1] has gone, as he has, to render account before the tribunal of God. Those who remain are therefore obliged either to uphold what they approved with such praise and such testimonies of esteem for the Author and for the book — saying of the one that he had distinguished himself by several other works, and of the other that it is filled with most learned and most curious researches into antiquity touching the sacred Books — or else to repair the injury they have done to the Church in approving so many scandalous fantasies, should they find themselves unable to justify them, as it does not appear possible that they should not.

There is only one point on which they might perhaps complain with some justice that I have treated M. Mallet unjustly. It is that I may have spoken of him in various places as though he were the original author of several quite impertinent things which I have since recognised he may have taken from a pitiable book[2] which I had not seen. But I am willing also to give them the example of what one ought to do when one has fallen into some fault. I therefore acknowledge this one. I was wrong to have regarded M. Mallet as the original author of all the extravagances with which his book is filled. There are some that are properly his own — and these are the coarsest. But I have discovered, through the book I have just mentioned, that he has often done nothing but follow blindly five or six Authors of the past century, whose works it is shameful for our own century to have preserved, so unworthy are they of the care that has been taken to draw them out of the oblivion in which our ancestors, wiser than we, had left them buried. And if M. Mallet's friends should claim to save him thereby from the just blame he has merited for the absurdities and follies he has had the audacity to attribute to the Church, it will be easy to confound them by showing that it is shameful for Doctors of the Sorbonne not to know that it is from the Holy Fathers, and not from these three-day Authors devoid of judgment and of light, that one must take the true spirit of the Church — and that, according to the Gospel, a blind man does not cease to be guilty of the imprudence that makes him fall into the ditch, for having followed blind guides.

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1 Father Tuboeuf, Prior of the Carmelites of Pont-Audemer.

2 *It appears probable that this is the book entitled:* Collectio Auctorum translationes Scripturarum in linguas vulgares damnantium, printed in 1661.

Approbatio

The Author of this Treatise on the Reading of Holy Scripture, against Doctor Mallet of the Sorbonne, etc., not only examines with the utmost fidelity and exactitude the proofs by which the aforesaid Doctor strives in vain to establish his remarkable paradox, that it was neither God's intention nor that of the Canonical Writers that the unlearned populace should read the divine Scriptures, but that this was reserved solely to the Priests and Doctors, but, while clearly and solidly demonstrating that the Doctor's arguments are nothing but a continuous string of hallucinations, indeed mere delirium, injurious to God and to the Church and pernicious to pious believers, he also faithfully strives to restore to the children of the Father the Testament which Dr. Mallet had presumed, with rash audacity, to wrest from their hands. Wherefore, since it asserts nothing contrary to the faith or to good morals, it will be of public use when printed. So I judge. Brussels, 28 October 1680.

J. D. CUYPER, S.T.L. Archpriest of Brussels, Censor of Books

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Preface

On the Design of This Work

It is not presently intended to answer the whole of M. Mallet's book, On the Reading of Holy Scripture in the Vernacular Tongue. The intention is only to expose what is most extravagant and most impious in it. And to better understand the limits one sets oneself, two things must be noted. The first, that there are, as it were, two books within this new work of M. Mallet's: for although it contains only thirty-one chapters, the first twenty-two form the first of these two books, and the final nine form the second. The second thing to be noted is that only these final nine chapters bear any relation to the general title of the book — because it is only at this point that he treats of Scripture translated into the vernacular, whereas in the first twenty-two he speaks always of Scripture in itself, such as it was dictated by the Holy Spirit to the Canonical Writers. I declare, then, that it is only to this first part that I am presently attending, reserving for another occasion to speak of that which concerns the prohibition against reading Holy Scripture in the vernacular without a written permission from the Inquisitor or the Bishop.

I shall say only this much on this last point: that M. Mallet, as is his custom, acts here in very bad faith, in proposing the Translators of Mons as his adversaries on the question of whether it is forbidden to read Holy Scripture in French without particular permission. For of the five French Versions produced in this century — by Father Véron, M. l'Abbé de Marolles, the Bishop of Vence, Father Amelotte, and the Translators of Mons — none was more reserved on this subject than the last-named, who contented themselves with representing in general the great fruit one may draw from the reading of Holy Scripture when one reads it with humility and piety, without entering into this particular question of whether permission is needed for it or not — whereas the others gave one to understand far more clearly that no such permission was needed.

No one could declare himself more forcefully against those who would forbid Holy Scripture to simple believers than M. de Marolles has done. He dedicates his third edition to all the Bishops of France, and having represented to them that the favourable reception given to the first two editions showed the taste the people had developed for the reading of this book — and that since it could only be useful to many, there was reason to hope for much further success from it — he rises with zeal against a certain hot-headed author of M. Mallet's temperament, who, having undertaken to show that the reading of the sacred books ought to be forbidden to the people, had done so in a published work bearing this scandalous title: THE SANCTUARY CLOSED TO THE PROFANE. "God be blessed," says this Abbé, "that the lamp is not hidden under the bushel, and that the veil being torn, the Father of lights has willed that the mysteries be revealed to us. I am filled with joy that at last the bread, having been left in the possession of strangers, is no longer torn from the hands of His natural children. Those who call them profane know them ill. They cannot be children and profane at

the same time. The profane, properly speaking, are the impious and the pagans who mock our mysteries, and who find scandal and folly in the cross of Jesus Christ. To give your peoples so salutary a consolation as this is not to give holy things to dogs — or else, by the same reasoning, one would have to deny them the use of the Sacraments, because they might abuse them."

He dwells at far greater length on this matter in his Preface, where he proposes explicitly this question: whether it is necessary, or even fitting, that persons of every condition should have the liberty to hear and read the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue — and he undertakes to prove, by the authority and example of the Holy Fathers, and by every sort of ancient and modern Author, that this liberty ought not to be taken away. Why then does M. Mallet not attack him rather than the Translators of Mons, who have spoken far less affirmatively on the matter? Has he forgotten that saying of St. James: If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced by the law as transgressors?

The Bishop of Vence makes his sentiment on this matter no less clear, though he has not treated it at length. For having dedicated his book to the faithful of every condition without distinction, the manner in which he addresses them could not be more episcopal, more Christian, nor more contrary to M. Mallet's notions. "Here," he tells them, "is the Testament of the Son of God, your Father and your Judge, which I offer you. I cannot doubt that its reading will be agreeable to you. You will see that He leaves you therein an entirely divine patrimony, which is His truth, and that He divides it among you in an admirable manner. For although it is one, He nonetheless adapts it to the condition and duties of each, so that all, in practising His precepts, may live in peace and arrive at the possession of His inheritance, which is eternal life. The Son of God has taken care to teach us therein, clearly and distinctly, all that we owe Him, as well as all that we owe our neighbour and ourselves. This is what the Gospels contain. The Apostolic Epistles form a commentary upon them, and a more extended and more distinct explanation, which leaves nothing in the Christian life we are to lead upon earth unexplained, and for which no rule is to be found there. This, then, is the book you must study night and day: the book you must not merely write upon your hands, nor have continually before your eyes, but which you must impress upon your hearts... Receive, then, with this new heart, this New Testament which I present to you. Read it with this heart. It will soon make you know that other books, in comparison with this one, tell you nothing but fables. It will carry into your minds the true light, which will not dazzle you with a false brilliance, but will illumine you in an effective and assured manner. It will not flatter you, but will make you know what you are, and what you ought to be."

Is this the idea M. Mallet gives of Holy Scripture in the vernacular? Does he represent it, as this Doctor does, as a dangerous book for the simple, one more likely to harm than to profit them? But since this pious and learned Prelate is so contrary to this Writer's pretensions, why has he not attacked him as well as the Translators of Mons? Has he forgotten this word of St.

James: If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced by the law as transgressors?

Nor should he have spared Father Amelotte. For this Father makes it very clearly understood in his Preface — though in his customary mysterious manner — that if there were formerly prohibitions against reading the Bible in the vernacular, they no longer subsist now, the circumstances that had occasioned them having changed. He distinguishes three kinds of times: that of the Holy Fathers, when everyone could read it and was exhorted to do so; that of the birth of the most recent heresies, when a distinction was made among the Laity, permitting some and forbidding others the reading of the sacred books; and the present time, in which he indicates clearly enough that, the reason for the second time having ceased, we have returned to the usage of the first.

"The Church," he says, "governs herself differently according to the times and the places, in the distribution she makes of this heavenly food to her children. Sometimes she entrusts it entirely to the faithful, even within their own households, just as the Law left the use of the Paschal Lamb to each Israelite; and there are occasions on which she even urges them to celebrate this banquet frequently, knowing that, according to St. Paul, the feast of the immolation of our Lamb is perpetual." It is to this he attributes the exhortations so often made by St. Chrysostom to all the faithful indiscriminately to read Holy Scripture. Such is the first of these three times. And here is the second: "Sometimes she makes a great distinction among the Laity, to whom she communicates these sacred loaves that God destines for the Priests and for those whom docility and constancy in the faith render worthy to be His household servants. But this is when the contagion of certain heresies inflames, and the unchained demon leads the peoples wherever it pleases, with a bridle of error which it places in their mouths."

"Today, nevertheless" (this is the last of these three times), "when the glory of Jesus Christ upon our altars consumes the darkness and dazzles the eyes of the Sacramentarians" (this means, in a more ordinary and less mystical style, that the reason for the second time has ceased, because heresy is no longer so contagious, and one is no longer so tempted as one was then to read Holy Scripture with a spirit of pride and independence, without wishing to submit oneself to the Church's judgment in the difficulties one encounters there) — "whatever liberty the Church grants me to translate the Bible for the consolation of virtuous persons who do not know the languages consecrated by the title placed upon the cross, and to serve even the learned at times by the light that one language casts upon another, it is not thereby intended to place the Liturgy on the same level as Holy Scripture." By this he meant to indicate, as appears from what follows, that the liberty he acknowledges everyone has to read Holy Scripture ought not to extend to reading the Mass in French — which he says, it is plain to see, only so as not to offend certain Bishops among his friends from the Assembly of 1661, before whom Cardinal Mazarin, for reasons of intrigue and politics known even to the Prelates of that assembly themselves, had the Missal translated into French by M. de Voisin

condemned. But this very fact makes it all the more clear that he intended his translation of the New Testament to be read by persons of every sort. For he speaks here of the Liturgy — a matter not at all in question — only to forestall the objection he saw clearly might be raised against him: that there is no likelihood the Church now approves of persons of every condition reading Scripture in the vernacular, since Bishops, not long ago, found it objectionable that the Mass should be given to the people to read in French. He chose to suppose that they were not wrong on this latter point; and it is for this reason that he found himself obliged to seek out poor reasons to show that no consequence could be drawn from the one case to the other, and that it did not follow that the people could not be left the liberty — which they had always had since the time of the Holy Fathers — to read the Bible in every sort of language, even though it was not judged proper to let them read the Mass in the vernacular.

One could not attribute any other thought to him without imputing to him an insupportable failure of common sense. For had he believed that permission was needed to read his translation of the New Testament, just as he imagined permission was needed to read M. de Voisin's French Missal, it would have been an impertinence to compose a two-page discourse in which he undertakes to prove that, when it is a question of knowing what one ought or ought not to let the people read, the Liturgy must not be placed on the same level as Holy Scripture — it being clearer than day that this supposed distinction could serve him for nothing except to show that the reading of the Liturgy in the vernacular may be forbidden to the people even while they have full liberty to read Holy Scripture in the same language, and that the distinction would have been entirely useless to him had he believed permission were required for both alike. Father Amelotte would therefore have been a more worthy object of M. Mallet's anger than the Translators of Mons, were it not that this Doctor is more driven by passion to burden those whom he has undertaken to render odious with everything he can construe as a crime, than to actually defend what he calls the Church's practice — namely, that the people ought not to read Holy Scripture. For had this latter point been his principal aim, he ought not to have left unanswered Father Amelotte's Preface to the New Testament, which, being approved by many Bishops, is so capable of persuading all who read it of the contrary of what he maintains.

There remains only Father Véron. But he is the one M. Mallet was most obliged to take to task, since no one has more vigorously opposed this Doctor's sentiment, nor set against his supposed objections stronger considerations more capable of moving all those who truly love the salvation of souls.

He devotes an entire Foreword in his version of the New Testament to treating this very question, and gives it a title that M. Mallet ought to regard as a great boldness: the reading of the Bible in French forbidden to no one. And here is how he begins it:

> *I have done all the foregoing so that each person may more freely devote himself to the reading of the Book of life. But on this point I must briefly resolve this question: whether some leave, permission, or particular faculty is needed — at least for*

craftsmen or women, or other simple believers — in order to read the Bible; or whether the simple people, even women, may read it without asking this leave of the Bishop, nor even of their Curé or Confessor.

The Ministers [of the Reformed religion] attract and presently maintain in their party in France several thousand simple folk by no more specious pretext than by saying and repeating, both in their sermons and in their books, with great exaggeration, that the Bible is a forbidden book among Catholics; that the Council of Trent, and a certain expurgatory Index, forbid its reading — that is to say, they cry, they hide from the children their Father's Testament; that this is to take away the light that directs our actions, to withhold from us the Book of life; in short, that it is a clear sign that the Bible is contrary to the Papists, and that the Roman Church and her Doctors know it well, since they prohibit its reading. I hear these reproaches continually at the Charenton sermons; and if our Doctors were present there, or read the books of our adversaries, they would try to remove this stumbling-block from the poor people; at the very least they would not reinforce it, nor magnify it in their books and sometimes in their sermons, so as not to occasion the loss of so many souls, nor to do such injury to the Church, which they believe they are serving by their scrupulous sentiments — sentiments which cannot be sustained in sound Theology, nor in any assembly of Theologians, as I shall demonstrate hereafter.

He goes on to set forth the opinion of those who believe one cannot read the Bible in French without permission, and refutes it in these terms:

But I am astonished at these people, and, moved by a just zeal for the Catholic Religion and for the conversion of so many thousands of poor deceived souls, I say first that it is certain the Council of Trent never forbade the Bible, nor required such permission to read it, nor granted any permission to make such a prohibition, or to treat of the matter.

Having proved this, he shows that the foundation of this popular opinion is nothing but a rule of the Index, which he shows very well is not received in France — and he shows this by an observation that admits no reply: namely, that this same Index forbids, under the same penalties, the reading of Controversial books by Catholic Authors written in the vernacular, unless one has permission from the Inquisitor or the Bishop. Now there is no one in France who believes Catholics need permission to read the French Controversial books of Cardinals du Perron, de Bérulle, and Richelieu, nor those of Father Véron himself, nor those recently composed in defence of the Eucharist and to convict the Calvinists of having overturned the morality of Jesus Christ through their errors concerning Justification. And the Catholics of the Low Countries enjoy the same liberty to read Flemish books composed by Catholics on controverted matters. "Why then," he says, "would one need permission to read Holy Scripture in the vernacular any more than for Controversial books, since both are equally forbidden by this rule of the Index?"

"I conclude therefore once more," he adds, "from all the foregoing: that any person of the people may read the French Bible in a Catholic version in France, without being obliged to ask any permission, by any ecclesiastical law or rule that requires it. I say, by any ecclesiastical law. For the saying of St. Peter remains entirely intact: *Among the epistles of our brother Paul*, says this Saint, *there are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.*[2 Pet. 3:16] These unlearned and unstable, or weak in faith, ought without doubt to be careful for themselves, and for this to follow the direction of their Superiors... just as the sick follow the judgment of their Physicians, even to abstaining from meat and wine, food most wholesome in itself. So in such cases, etc. Apart from this case of peril, ignorance, instability, or weakness in faith — which is not general, and for which the Scriptures and natural reason teach us we ought to provide by direction alone — there is no obligation whatsoever to ask leave, permission, or direction in order to read the holy Bible in a Catholic translation, such as, for example, that of the Doctors of Louvain, of Besse, of Frizon, and the present one — to the reading of which the faithful are exhorted even from earliest youth. The example of Timothy, related with approval and praise by St. Paul, invites everyone to it."

This is what a man who wished to act with some sincerity and honour in this dispute ought to have opposed. This is the adversary M. Mallet ought to have undertaken to refute. He takes it for a great error to say that the reading of Holy Scripture in the vernacular is forbidden to no one — and Father Véron maintains that this is an incontestable truth, above all in France, and proves it by very sound reasons. And he did this not in some loose pamphlet that might have been lost, and which M. Mallet could claim never to have seen, but at the very head of his translation of the New Testament, dedicated to the Assembly of the Clergy. He does not treat this question in passing, but deliberately, as we have shown. Was there ever a more unworthy and more cowardly proceeding than M. Mallet's, who, wishing to represent it as a great evil that the Laity should read the New Testament in French without having obtained permission, attacks people who have never expressed themselves on the matter — as though they were the authors of this supposed disorder — while shamefully concealing what a Jesuit had said, long before their translation, with a force and a liberty that should have brought condemnation upon him from the very Bishops to whom he offered his translation, had what he asserted so boldly been as bad as M. Mallet would have us believe? But one ought not to have expected him to act otherwise; for had he named Father Véron, he would, on the one hand, have greatly damaged his design of laying everything he condemns at the door of the supposed Jansenists, and would, on the other hand, have found himself obliged to refute step by step the solid proofs of this Author, so celebrated in matters of Controversy, and so zealous for the conversion of heretics.

But, as I have already said, this is not presently what occupies me. For on this matter, three distinct questions may be raised:

The first: whether the Holy Scriptures were composed, according to the intention of God and the Canonical Writers, only to be read by Priests and Doctors, and not by the people.

The second: whether the people, ordinarily having full liberty to read them, there were good reasons, in the last century, owing to the particular circumstances of that time, to restrict this liberty by requiring written permission of those who would wish to read them in the vernacular.

The third: whether one may say that these prohibitions no longer have any force now, the reasons that occasioned them no longer existing — as Cardinal de Richelieu seems clearly enough to suggest in his book of Controversies, in saying that this prohibition was only for a time; as Father Amelotte has marked more clearly; as Father Véron still more so; as the Bishop of Castorie has just taught in the second edition of his book *On the Reading of Holy Scripture*; and as Ferrarius, a most learned Jesuit, affirmed at the beginning of this century in his *Prolegomena on Scripture*, page 136, with regard to Germany, where, he says, we see that the Bishops, the Curés, and the Confessors not only do not blame those who read the German versions of the New Testament by Eckius or Dietenberger without having asked permission, but find it very good that they should do so, and praise them for it.

I do not intend to enter into these last two questions, which concern the second part of M. Mallet's book. I confine myself solely to the first, which he took as the subject of his first part. It is therefore this first part of this Doctor's book that I intend to examine — and which I maintain to be full of impious paradoxes and untenable errors, the chief of which (one that has not escaped him, but which he repeats in several places, and which he tries to prove by a great number of very poor arguments) is this: *that it was the intention of God and of the Canonical Writers that the Holy Scriptures, of both the Old and the New Testament, should not be read by the people, but only by the Priests and by the Doctors of the Synagogue and of the Church, who would impart to the people such knowledge of them as they should judge fitting*.

I do not claim merely that this doctrine may be drawn from his words by inference. I claim that he teaches it in express terms; that it is the sole subject he treats in these twenty-two chapters, which form two-thirds of his book; and that he employs every kind of effort to establish it, both with regard to the sacred Books of the Old Testament and to those of the New. But since he treats these two points separately (I mean what concerns the Old and the New Testament) — the first sixteen chapters being employed in the proof of the first, and the five following in that of the second — and since, moreover, he employs the twenty-second to establish his fantasies on both by the authority of the Fathers, we shall likewise follow, for greater clarity, the same division; and these shall be the three matters we treat in the three Books of this Work.

Book I Concerning the Reading of the Books of the Old Testament

Chapter I A Summary Exposition of M. Mallet's Extravagant and Impious Paradoxes Regarding the Books of the Old Testament

§ I. I have already stated in the Preface to this work that M. Mallet's aim in the first part of his book was to prove that it was the intention of God and of the canonical writers that the Holy Scriptures — of both the Old and the New Testament — should not be read by the people, but only by the Priests and Doctors of the Synagogue and of the Church, who would impart to the people such knowledge of them as they judged fitting.

All persons with even the slightest instruction in the truths of Religion will doubtless find this so strange that they will have difficulty believing a Doctor of the Sorbonne could have dared to advance such a fantasy in a published book. Yet can one ask for anything more explicit than what M. Mallet says at the close of the 3rd chapter, page 18, after having cited two passages from Deuteronomy — in one of which it is said that the Priests shall read the words of the Law before all the children of Israel in the Sabbatical year, at the feast of Tabernacles, and in the other, that the Levites shall place the Law beside the Ark?

> *It appears," he says, "from these words of the sacred Text, that the will of Moses was to make the Priests the custodians of his books, and to forbid the people any knowledge of them except through the Priests' ministry — which is what prompted the Prophet Malachi to say: The lips of the Priest shall keep Knowledge, and it is from his mouth that they shall seek to learn it. For if the Priests are the custodians of the knowledge of the Law, and if the peoples of the Old Testament were to learn it only from their mouths, it follows that they were not to acquire knowledge of it by themselves, or through the reading of the sacred Books.*

I think the falsity of this conclusion is plain enough. It is as if one were to say that a child must not be allowed to read his Catechism, nor a schoolboy to read Virgil, because both require their teachers to explain these works for them to understand them better. But we are at present concerned only to establish the fact I have asserted — namely, that M. Mallet teaches this — and it is not yet the moment to examine whether he is right to do so.

He goes further still in the passage that immediately follows what I have just quoted. For he maintains that it is a matter of divine law that the people should not read the sacred Books. And to show that this is no slip on his part, but that he says nothing without having considered it carefully, he places this heading at the end of chapter 3: *Conclusion of what has been said in the 3 preceding Chapters.* And here is what he claims to have established therein:

> *The reader might already conclude from the little we have just said that the people of the Old Testament were not granted the reading of the sacred Books. For if it is true*

> *that reason dictates that the mysteries of Religion should not be disclosed to everyone; if this secrecy is of divine right and consistent with the conduct of God; and if this was also Moses's intention in giving us the books of the Law — it follows necessarily that the wisest among the Hebrews did not judge it fitting to communicate the books of Scripture to the people.*

He makes a similar conclusion at the end of chapter 16, to show that he had fully proved, in these first 16 chapters, that the reading of the sacred Books of the Old Testament was forbidden to the people:

> *It is easy to conclude from what I have said above," he says, "that it could not have been the custom of the Old Testament to give the people the books of Holy Scripture to read.*

And since the proofs he has produced appear to him convincing, he believed his readers would be entirely persuaded of his paradox if he reduced them all to a few words. We likewise think it proper to present them in the same fashion after him, distinguishing them by numbers so that they may be more readily noted, and so that we may thereafter have the more occasion to refute them one by one.

This practice, he says, of giving the people the sacred books to read could not have been introduced:

1. Because the Priests and the Doctors of the Law would have acted against common sense and the principles of reason.
2. Because the Wisdom of God did not judge it fitting to disclose to the people many mysteries which He kept secret.
3. Because Moses did not express himself clearly, and spoke to the people only obscurely and with veiled face.
4. Because it is very probable that the books of the Law were not composed in the vernacular language of the Jews.
5. Because it is quite certain that among the sacred books, several were written in languages unknown to the people.
6. Because the Jews went more than six hundred years without having any book of Scripture in their mother tongue.
7. Because it is further probable that Moses wrote his books in a new script which he had expressly invented.
8. Because, from time to time, new scripts were further invented in order to make the reading of these books impossible for those who were unworthy of it.
9. Because these books were so scarce that in the time of King Josias, they were brought to that Prince as a novel discovery.
10. Because there were so few copies that the Church Fathers believed they had all been burned in the conflagration of the Temple archives and of the city of Jerusalem.

11. Because the Gentiles sought them out with great diligence, while the Priests, on the contrary, did everything they could to prevent them from falling into their hands.
12. Finally, it was so far from the intention of the Doctors of the Law and of the wisest among the Hebrews to make the sacred books accessible to all, that they did not even permit the reading of them generally to the disciples they were themselves instructing.

Such are all his proofs for showing that the people were not allowed to read the books of the Old Testament. He is so satisfied with them that he repeats once more the conclusion he had drawn from them, in order to press home their force:

> *All these reasons taken together are, in my opinion, more than sufficient to convince every reasonable man that it was not the custom of the Old Testament to place the books of Holy Scripture in the hands of the people.*

Yet I have no doubt that all who are learned in the Church will already have anticipated the refutation that is now to follow, and will be saying to themselves that the mere exposition of these proofs is enough to make any reasonable man judge that there has never been anything more absurd than what M. Mallet undertakes to establish — namely, that the reading of the sacred Books was forbidden to the common people of the Jews — and that nothing has ever been proved by more extravagant reasonings. This I shall find it very easy to demonstrate.

But first, in order to forewarn those who may have been deceived by the esteem which a certain faction bore toward M. Mallet, it is well to set against him an authority they will be compelled to prefer to that of their Doctor. It is what the Bishop of Meaux (Bossuet) says in his excellent *Discourse on Universal History*, Part 2, §3:

> *Until the time of the Messiah,* says that illustrious Prelate, t*he People of God, in all their difficulties, appealed to none but Moses. As Rome reverenced the laws of Romulus, Numa, and the Twelve Tables; as Athens had recourse to those of Solon; as Lacedaemon preserved and respected those of Lycurgus — so the Hebrew people constantly invoked those of Moses. Moreover, the Lawgiver had so well regulated all things that there was never any need to alter them. This is why the body of Judaic law is not a collection of various laws enacted at different times and on different occasions: Moses, enlightened by the spirit of God, had foreseen everything. One finds no ordinances from David, or Solomon, or Jehoshaphat, or Hezekiah, though all were most zealous for justice. Good Princes had only to enforce the Law of Moses, and contented themselves with recommending its observance to their successors. To add or remove a single article was an act of transgression that the People would have regarded with horror. The Law was needed at every moment, to govern not only the feasts, the sacrifices, and the ceremonies, but all other public and private actions: judgments, contracts, marriages, inheritances, funerals, even the form of dress, and in general everything pertaining to manners. There was no other book in which one studied the precepts of the good life. It was to be turned and meditated upon day and*

night; its maxims to be gathered, always kept before one's eyes. It was there that children learned to read. The only rule of education given to their parents was to teach them, to instil in them, to make them observe this holy Law, which alone could make them wise from childhood. Thus it had to be in everyone's hands. Beyond the assiduous reading that each person was to do in private, a public reading was made every seven years, in the solemn year of remission and rest, at the feast of Tabernacles, when all the People were assembled for eight days. Moses deposited beside the Ark the original of Deuteronomy — a summary of the whole Law. But lest in the course of time it should be altered through the malice or negligence of men, in addition to the copies that circulated among the people, authentic copies were made, carefully reviewed and kept by the Priests and Levites, which served as originals.

This is what all have believed, until M. Mallet and certain authors of the last century who were no wiser than he. Let us therefore examine their vain efforts against so certain a truth.

Chapter II Examination of the First Proof: That the Priests and Doctors of the Law Would Have Acted Against Common Sense and Reason Had They Allowed the People to Read the Sacred Books

This first proof is a summary of what M. Mallet treated in his first chapter, entitled *On the conduct of the ancient Philosophers concerning the communication of their doctrine and their books.* He claims to prove therein that the sacred books — of both the Old and the New Testament (for this first proof is general, and it is only in chapter 2 that he begins to treat what concerns the Old Testament in particular) — ought not to be read by the people: because the ancient Philosophers took great care to conceal their maxims and their books from the people; because Plato said, looking about him, "Take care that none hear us but those we have admitted to our mysteries"; because the Egyptians were accustomed to place in their temples the figure of a Sphinx, to warn the people that in matters of Religion they should expect nothing but riddles; because the Romans, who were the greatest statesmen in the world, kept the secrets of their Religion so inviolably that when a private citizen had the temerity to violate it by displaying something from their sacred books, the Emperor immediately condemned him to death as a criminal guilty of divine lèse-majesté, who had done injury to his Gods. And because, finally, all the nations of the earth that possessed any degree of civilization had always kept inviolably this maxim: to treat the mysteries of their Religions in a most obscure manner before the people. All of this appears so forceful to M. Mallet that he dares to say it is a want of common sense not to recognize that it is an intolerable profanation of Holy Scripture to allow it to be read by the ignorant and by women.

> *It is,* he says (page 3)*, to have very little veneration for Holy Scripture, to wish to place it indiscriminately in the hands of everyone, and to maintain that it should be translated into all kinds of languages, so that the ignorant as well as the great minds, and the most dissolute of men as well as the wisest, may come to know it by themselves and learn its mysteries. This profanation of the word of God appears of itself so unreasonable that it would be enough to have a little common sense to comprehend its injustice.*

Must one then accept that all those who take what Mallet says as true should no longer regard these divine men except as people who, through a manifest want of reason and common sense, exposed the divine Scriptures to a continual profanation? St. Jerome, hitherto believed to be so great a venerator of them, would have been an inexcusable profaner — since, blinding himself to the fact that they ought to be read only by the learned, by great minds, and by the wisest, he recommends to mothers that they have them read by the youngest of their daughters. And St. Chrysostom would have contributed even more to this profanation, by so often exhorting everyone to this reading without excepting anyone, and singling out in particular the craftsman, the servant, the poor widow, and the most ignorant. Are we in a time when one may say anything, however wicked and scandalous, with impunity, so long as one is

backed by a powerful faction and makes a profession of bearing ill will toward people whom one endeavours by every means to render odious?

But let us examine each of these great reasons which have persuaded M. Mallet that the Fathers had no common sense in having thus allowed Scripture to be profaned by letting it be read by the ignorant and by women.

I shall begin with the minor ones, which I have not yet noted, and which immediately follow what I have just quoted concerning the profanation of the Scriptures should they be read by everyone. For, says he, who does not know that, in the common usage of men, it is scarcity that gives value to things; that it is the difficulty of obtaining a good that gives rise to its esteem; that it is the secrecy maintained in great affairs that impresses upon them a sense of respect; and that a favour denied to no one ordinarily produces nothing but ingratitude and contempt?

But all of this is nothing but a schoolboy's declamation, which one need only apply to another subject in order to make M. Mallet himself recognise its absurdity. For who could prevent a cantankerous mind from employing these very same arguments to prove that Mass ought not to be celebrated so frequently, nor all manner of persons allowed to attend it publicly — but that it should be said only five or six times a year and admitted only to chosen persons, who should attend it in secret, as Catholics do in England? For who does not know, such a person might say just as well as M. Mallet, that in the common usage of men it is scarcity that gives value to things; that it is the difficulty of obtaining a good that gives rise to its esteem; that it is the secrecy maintained in great affairs that impresses upon them a sense of respect; and that a favour denied to no one ordinarily produces nothing but ingratitude and contempt? M. Mallet need only answer himself with whatever he would say to this would-be reformer. Let us therefore look at the other reasons on which he has dwelt more, and which he has developed further — for on these first ones he must be given some latitude: it is a commonplace that came to his mind; he has unburdened himself of it without considering carefully enough what application he would make of it, nor whether one could not draw from it some troublesome consequences.

The first of these major reasons is that the Philosophers took great care to conceal their maxims and their books from the people. Therefore, reason and common sense must lead us to believe that the intention of Moses and the Apostles was that their books should not be read by either the Jewish people or the Christian people. A fine conclusion! As if Moses and the Apostles had been obliged to conduct themselves by the same rules as those Sages of Paganism whom St. Paul says God regarded as nothing but fools. He is nonetheless so unfortunate in his proofs that the very example of these Philosophers, far from being favourable to him, proves the exact opposite of what he claims. For if they wished to conceal certain of their maxims, it was by not writing them down, or by writing them obscurely — not by preventing the people from reading the books in which they had written them. And how

could they have prevented it? Libraries and booksellers' shops were full of them. Whoever wished could read them — and women as well as others.

If Plato says charmingly in one of his Dialogues, "Take care that none hear us but those we have admitted to our mysteries," one must be very simple not to see that this is a play of wit, designed to make what he was about to say seem more estimable as something highly mysterious. For to imagine that he was speaking seriously, and that it was his genuine intention that no one should know it but those initiated into these philosophical mysteries — that would be as if one were to maintain that Horace also genuinely wished to conceal from the profane what he said as Priest of the Muses, in the Ode that begins thus:

> *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo, Favete linguis: carmina non prius Audita Musarum sacerdos Virginibus puerisque canto.*

It is quite clear that both were making sport, since the one, in publishing his Dialogue, and the other his Ode, showed by that very act that they were most pleased for everyone to know what they pretended to wish to conceal from the profane. And one cannot doubt that this was also the aim of all the Philosophers who published their books on Philosophy, and that they wished them to be read by all manner of persons — men and women, young and old, learned and ignorant, and even by those whom they called fools, because they allowed themselves to be carried away by their passions — since they maintained that this reading could help make such people good and cure them of their folly.

This we see in a pagan Poet who, speaking of himself as one of little wisdom and poor morals, nonetheless testifies that he applies himself seriously to the reading of these Philosophers' books in order to become a better man, and who counsels the same reading to his friends as useful to everyone, and because — he says — it is a shame to take such care to preserve the health of one's body, or to increase one's wealth, while taking so little care to heal one's soul of its passions and vices through the study of Wisdom.

Must it not then be M. Mallet who is lacking in common sense, having wished to prove from the conduct of the Philosophers that it is a profanation of the sacred books to allow them to be read indiscriminately by all manner of persons — when nothing was more capable of disabusing him of his false ideas than the example of these Sages of Paganism, whose books the pagans regarded in the same way that we regard those of Scripture: as most useful to them for becoming wise and virtuous? For if they believed that the reading of those books could serve even the most dissolute to bring them back to themselves and help them abandon their disorders, who can think without impiety that the reading of the Gospel cannot have the same effect upon a man — I say not only a man of little order, but one altogether vicious and given over to criminal habits — if God, awakening in him that remnant of faith which may not be altogether extinguished even in the greatest sinners, leads him to read it with respect and with an incipient desire, however feeble as yet, to escape from his unhappy state?

It is therefore not to have veneration for Holy Scripture, as M. Mallet falsely imagines; but it is to understand very poorly its spirit and the end for which God gave it to men, to wish that it be profaned when it is read by the ignorant as well as by the learned. For what may be said to be the principal cause of M. Mallet's delusions is that he apparently does not know that the Holy Scriptures — and above all those of the New Testament — are more for the heart than for the mind; more to make one savour God than to make one know Him; more to inspire charity than to give light; more to strengthen souls under temptation, to sustain the fainthearted, to console the afflicted, to draw back to the right path those who may have strayed from it, than to satisfy the learned — to whom knowledge alone, says the Apostle, can be nothing but an occasion of vanity.

And let none suppose this to be a spirituality without foundation. It is a truth of faith, since it is St. Paul who teaches it to us, and who places therein the principal utility of the Scriptures for Christians, without even speaking of the knowledge they give of the mysteries — suggesting perhaps that the common faithful have less need of them for that purpose, since they can learn these things through the voice of the Church and their Pastors. Let us then hear this Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 15:

> *Let every one of us please his neighbour unto good to edification; for even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

One must mark carefully this connection. This *For* is not without significance. St. Paul, wishing to urge the faithful not to please themselves, but to think only of edifying one another, cites a passage from the Psalms, which he explains as referring to Jesus Christ, though it might seem that David had spoken it of himself — and he takes from this the occasion to show them the fruit they may draw from the reading of the holy books: not to become more learned, but to be consoled in their afflictions, sustained in the evils of this life by the patience the Scriptures inspire, and strengthened in temptations by a lively hope of the goods to come which they set before us. Whoever is well filled with this apostolic truth will never find it to be a want of respect and veneration for the divine Scriptures to wish that they be read by the ignorant as well as by the learned, by women as well as by the greatest minds, and even by dissolute persons as well as by the wisest.

For is it a want of respect toward the sacred books to desire that they be employed for the ends for which St. Paul assures us they have been given to us? Now, will M. Mallet dare to say that the poor, the ignorant, and the women whom he judges so unworthy of reading the Scriptures do not have as much need as the learned and the great minds to go there and seek strength in their weaknesses, help in their temptations, consolation in their afflictions, patience in their sorrows, something to strengthen their faith when it wavers, to awaken their hope of the goods to come when those of this world attract them, to give new vigour to their love when they fear it may be growing faint? And as for dissolute persons, is it not said of the

Law of the Lord — which is the same as His word — that it *converteth souls: lex Domini immaculata convertens animas*? Not that the letter alone can do this; but God often takes pleasure in joining His spirit to it, and it would be tempting Him to neglect external means under the pretext that they accomplish nothing without interior grace.

But what appearance is there, he will say, of placing so holy a thing as Scripture in such unworthy hands? Is this not profaning it? It is therefore also profaning sermons to admit to them all manner of persons, and to exhort even the most dissolute to attend them in the hope that they may be touched. The living word that proceeded immediately from the divine Person of Jesus Christ when He was upon earth — was it not still more worthy of respect, or rather more adorable, than the word written in the Gospel? Yet did He think that, in order not to profane it, He should address it only to the learned, to great minds, and to the wise — as M. Mallet maintains that it is to profane the written word to permit its reading to the ignorant, to those of lesser mind such as he believes women's minds ordinarily to be, and to dissolute persons? Far from it: this divine Saviour declares that it is to these latter and not to the former that He came to announce the mysteries of His Kingdom. He says that the Holy Spirit sent Him to preach the Gospel to the poor; and He gives thanks to His Father for having hidden the truths He preached from the wise and the prudent, and having revealed them to the simple and the little. He did not disdain to converse with a holy woman who listened to Him seated at His feet, so ravished at hearing that divine word that she was altogether beside herself and had lost all other thought. And a Christian, a Doctor, will dare to tell us that the Gospel would be profaned if read by women? What would he have said had he seen Our Lord make it known to Publicans, to sinners, and to dissolute women, and say to self-styled righteous men who took scandal at this, that these Publicans and these dissolute women would precede them into the Kingdom of God? He would doubtless have murmured at it just as the Pharisees did. But let him apply to himself what He who came to save sinners said to those Pharisees to appease their murmuring: that it is not the healthy who have need of a physician. Is it not the same Jesus Christ who then spoke in His mortal flesh who still speaks in His Gospel? Why then do we not wish that He should still speak there to sinners, to draw them to conversion, as He spoke to them in those days?

But there are some, says M. Mallet, who will abuse it — as St. Peter assures us, warning us that the ignorant and those weak in faith abuse Scripture to their ruin, and wrest it to a false sense. Yet were there not those who abused the preaching of Jesus Christ? Did it not become for many an occasion of becoming more wicked? Did it not draw upon Him the envy of the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, who, having called Him a blasphemer, never ceased to persecute Him until they had put Him to death? This is what the holy elder Simeon had foretold to His holy Mother, that He would be for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel. Such also is the lot of the Gospel written and preached, read and heard. It has been, as the Apostle says (2 Cor. 2:16), and it shall be until the end of the world, *unto some the savour of death unto death; and unto the other the savour of life unto life.* Would one have dared to say to St. Paul: You had better not preach it then, so as not to be the occasion of the ruin of

many? — just as one says here: It is better that the greater part of Christians be deprived of the consolation and the advantages they could draw from reading it, than to give occasion to some to make a bad use of it? And what would he have replied, if not what he says in the same place: that he renders thanks to God for diffusing through him the sweet savour of the knowledge of the name of Jesus Christ; and that even though what is to some the savour of life is to others the savour of death, this does not prevent him from being always, before God, the sweet savour of Jesus Christ — whether toward those who are perishing or toward those who are being saved?

He says in another place (1 Cor. 1:18) that *the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness* — that it is a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. Did this prevent him from preaching Jesus crucified both to Jews and to Gentiles? Did this give him the idea that certain persons in the last century had, who, preaching the Gospel in China and seeing that these peoples were reluctant to acknowledge as God a man who had died upon a gibbet, announced to them at first only a glorified Jesus, and even hid the Crucifix from them? Certainly not. This consideration of the abuse that many made of the preaching of Jesus dead upon the cross for our salvation did not prevent him from saying (ibid. v. 22): *The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

Yet this is the position to which M. Mallet is reduced. He maintains that, because the reading of the sacred books could be a stumbling block to some among the Jewish and Christian peoples, it ought to be forbidden generally to both, and permitted only to the Priests and Doctors of the Synagogue and of the Church. And he is so possessed by this foolish notion that he dares to say it is a want of veneration for Holy Scripture not to share his view, and to approve of a profanation so unreasonable that one need only have a little common sense to discover its injustice.

But whence is it that this same common sense does not lead him to reason in the same way on similar subjects? Is it only the reading of the sacred books that can be abused? Is it not on the contrary manifest that there is nothing so holy of which the malice of men does not abuse? He ought therefore to propose also that all churches be shut. For how many profanations take place in them! He ought to represent that it would be advisable for so many Masses not to be said, to prevent God from being offended there by the impious irreverences of so many wicked Christians. He ought above all to ensure that people no longer receive Communion, or that they do so only once a year. For how many sins of sacrilegious Communions are, on the one hand, more frequent, and, on the other, more horrible than those he so fears the ignorant and women will commit in reading Holy Scripture?

But if ever the derangement of the human mind has shown itself, it is in this instance, where we see that the very same persons who find it so wrong for even devout women to read the New Testament, and who condemn the spiritual directors who counsel it, nonetheless admit

to the holy table — and even push toward it — the most irreverent, the most immodest, and the most worldly of women. They do not fear that impudent sinners who come to them seeking absolution, in order to bring freshly committed impurities to the holy altar, may find death there. They do not fear where there is so much cause for fear — or rather, where one may be assured that these sinners can find nothing there but their condemnation, treating Jesus Christ in so unworthy a manner, however absolved they believe themselves to be. And yet here they turn religious and timid, and a vague fear that God may be offended by the abuse that someone might make of His word holds them back and makes them severe — when it is a question of leaving to simple persons or ignorant women, but devout ones, or to men of good sense who know only the language of their nurses, the consolation of reading Holy Scripture. And yet there is a great difference between the two cases; and the first demands a far different preparation than the second. To receive the Eucharist worthily, we must be in a state of holiness: *Sancta Sanctis* — Holy things for the holy. But that which God has willed to be a means of bringing us into that state, or of recovering it if we have fallen from it, cannot necessarily require that we already be in it in order to make use of it without sin. Now one cannot doubt that Holy Scripture is such a means — whether one reads it oneself or hears it read. The practice of all the ancient Church assures us of this, and the division of the Liturgy into two parts — what was said from the beginning until the Offertory being called the Mass of the Catechumens, and what was said from the Offertory to the end being called the Mass of the Faithful — is a manifest proof thereof. For whereas the Church admitted to this latter part only those faithful who were in a state to partake of its sacrifice, and caused to depart the Catechumens, the Energumens, and the penitents who, being separated from communion, were also deprived of the sight of the mysteries — it allowed everyone to be present until the Offertory, because it was in this first part that the reading of Holy Scripture and the preaching of the Gospel took place, of which it wished to deprive no one.

There is only one disposition that renders one unworthy of it: the one that Jesus Christ indicated by these words (*Matt.* 7:6): *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.* By which Our Lord wished to designate, under the figures of these two kinds of animals held in great abomination among the Jews, those who not only show their contempt for the truths of the Gospel by the impurity of their lives, but who are ready to tear apart those who would announce them.

This is also the passage that M. Mallet placed at the head of his book, as being the foundation of all he had to say. Yet it is difficult to see how he could have made application of it, whether to the first part of his book or to the last. For his design in the first part being to prove that Scripture was not allowed to be read by the common people either of the Jews or of the Christians, he could only make use of these words of Jesus Christ by reasoning as follows:

Jesus Christ forbids us to give what is holy to dogs, and to cast pearls before swine. Now, excepting only the Priests and Doctors of the Synagogue and the Church, all other Jews and all

other Christians must have been regarded — and indeed were — as dogs and swine. Therefore one ought not, and did not, give them what is holy, or cast pearls before them, as one would have done had one given them Scripture to read.

And his design in the second part being to show that while Scripture is permitted indiscriminately to all who can read it in Latin, the same practice should not apply to those who, not knowing Latin, could only read it in the vernacular — he could only employ these same words of Jesus Christ for that purpose by reasoning thus:

Jesus Christ forbids us to give what is holy to dogs, and to cast pearls before swine. Now women and the ignorant who know only the language of their nurses — though they possess piety and seek God in simplicity of heart — must be regarded as dogs and swine. Therefore one must not allow them to read Holy Scripture, which they could only read in the vernacular.

I leave it to all persons of good sense to judge whether such reasonings are just. Let us now look at the second part of this first proof.

Chapter III Examination of the Second Part of the First Proof, Drawn from the Secrecy Which the Pagans Maintained in Order to Conceal the Mysteries of Their Religions

This is still worse than what he said about the Philosophers. For at least there were good things in the Philosophers' books, whereas all the Religions of the Pagans were nothing but inventions of the Demons, who had themselves rendered the honours due to the true God alone.

Omnes Dii gentium daemonia.

The Pagans had strong reasons to conceal their pretended mysteries from the peoples. These were often nothing but brutalities and infamies which decency alone obliged them to hide — as Clement of Alexandria shows in his first book of the *Stromata*, concerning the mysteries of Venus, Bacchus, Ceres, and the Great Goddess — or else they were cruel immolations of human victims, as became apparent at Alexandria in the temple of Serapis. When this temple was given to the Patriarch by Theodosius to be made into a church, and some repairs were to be carried out, workers digging there discovered dark caverns more fitted to conceal crimes than to celebrate religious mysteries. This caused the Gentiles to stir up a sedition to prevent the workers from proceeding, for they did not wish anyone to excavate these secret places where were found the heads of dismembered human bodies that had served in their abominable sacrifices. Or these were histories which it was in the Pagans' interest to keep secret, because they showed that their Gods had been merely men who had themselves been guilty of many vices. Or they were superstitions so poorly devised and so ridiculous that all men of intelligence laughed at them, as one sees in Cicero's books *On Divination*. Or finally they were secrets of statecraft, which served to lead the peoples wherever those in power wished — for which secrecy was entirely necessary. And it is perhaps this that caused St. Paul to say to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12:2) that when they were pagans they allowed themselves to be led wherever they were driven, toward mute idols.

What a shame, then, to take this secrecy of the pagans as a reason for concealing the mysteries of their salvation — not only from the Jews but from Christians themselves — or rather for refusing to allow them to learn anything of these mysteries through the reading of the Holy Scriptures! For it is solely this last point that is at issue here, not whether the mysteries of Religion should or should not be concealed from the common body of Christians.

This example is therefore doubly defective and impertinently adduced: because on the one hand, nothing can be concluded from the conduct of politicians whose sole aim was to make Religion serve their own interests, as to what the Priests and Ministers of the true Religion ought to do, whose only end must be the salvation of the peoples; and on the other hand, M. Mallet would not dare to say that the reason he judges the people ought not to read Scripture is that the mysteries of Religion must be hidden from them. Such a thought would be impious, and would serve only to justify the negligence of so many Pastors who leave the poor country

peoples in ignorance of the mysteries of the faith — for they could then say that there is no harm in this, since, according to M. Mallet, it is a maxim that common sense has always led the most civilized nations to observe: to conceal from the peoples the mysteries of their Religions. Let him then speak plainly and declare whether he intends to sanction the conduct of negligent Pastors by the example of the pagan Priests, who concealed from the peoples whatever concerned the worship of their Gods. But we may be quite certain he would not dare to do so, and that he will be compelled to acknowledge that, far from wishing the mysteries of Religion to be hidden from Christians of any condition, the Church's intention is that they be taught these mysteries from childhood — including the most elevated, the most incomprehensible, and those most apparently contrary to human reason — and that accordingly it could not be in order to conceal these mysteries that one would wish the ignorant and women, whose reading of Scripture M. Mallet would forbid, to be kept from it. For what would they find there more astonishing and more above human intelligence than what they have already encountered in their Catechisms? One God in three Persons; a God made man and dying for us upon the cross; original sin; the resurrection of bodies reduced to dust and ashes; eternal punishment for a single mortal sin; and all the marvels of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

He must therefore admit that this example of the pagans concealing their mysteries can serve him not at all in establishing his fantasy — that it was the intention not only of Moses with regard to the common people of the Jews, but also of the Apostles with regard to the common faithful among Christians, that they should not read Holy Scripture. To which one may add that even among the pagans themselves, the mysteries were concealed from none who had been initiated into them. Now we are speaking here only of the baptized, all of whom are initiates into the mysteries of Christianity, since that is the very name given to them by the Fathers: *sequamur autem initiati quae dicuntur — "let us who are initiated follow what is said."* Nothing can therefore be taken from them by this example with respect to knowledge of the mysteries of their Religion.

This is why nothing is more out of place than to cite on this matter extended passages from St. Clement of Alexandria, as others have done, to prove that the common body of Christians ought not to be allowed to read Holy Scripture in the vernacular. For that ancient Father speaks of the pagans' silence with regard to the mysteries of their Religion only in order to justify the practice observed by the Ministers of the Church — not toward Christians and the baptized, but toward those who were either pagans, or who, beginning to believe in Jesus Christ, had not yet been regenerated by the Sacrament of Baptism, through which alone one enters the Church and participates in its mysteries. Moreover, the mysteries that the Christian Priests did not wish to be divulged to outsiders were the Sacraments — and in particular that of the Eucharist — and not the Holy Scriptures, which, far from being concealed from the children of the Church, were not even prevented from being heard by Pagans and Catechumens; for everyone was admitted, as I have already noted, to that part of the Mass in which the Scriptures were read. Thus all these passages from St. Clement of Alexandria, and

similar ones from the other Fathers on the secret of the mysteries, are doubly misapplied. For on the one hand, the mysteries whose secrecy they commend are not the Holy Scriptures, which they considered entirely fitting to be read by all manner of persons; and on the other hand, it is not the baptized from whom they wished the mysteries to be concealed.

But before finishing with this point, I cannot pass over without a word a barbarous example drawn from the pagans, which M. Mallet proposes to support his claim that the sacred Books ought not to be left for the people to read. The Romans, he says, who were the greatest statesmen in the world, kept the secret of their religion so inviolably that when a private citizen had the temerity to violate it by displaying something from their sacred Books, the Emperor condemned him immediately to death as a criminal guilty of divine lèse-majesté, who had done injury to his Gods. The words of Valerius Maximus, book 1, chapter 1, to which he refers us, bear even more directly upon his subject — though it is apparent he had not actually read them, since had he read them, it would not have been possible for him to mistake King Tarquin for an Emperor:

> *Tarquinius Rex M. Tullium Duumvirum, quod librum secreta civilium sacrorum continentem custodia suae commissum corruptus Petronio Sabino describendum dedisset, culeo insutum in mare abijci jussit; idque supplicii genus multo post parricidis lege irrogatum est.*

To what purpose can this example serve, if not to persuade the simple-minded that the books of the canonical Scriptures ought to remain under the same seal of secrecy, and that those who have made them accessible to all by having them copied — as this Duumvir did with the books of the Roman religion — would have deserved to be thrown into the sea sewn up in a sack, as criminals guilty of divine lèse-majesté? I am well aware that he would not dare to say that this is his view. He himself would deserve such a punishment were he bold enough to advance so great an impiety. But let him recognize thereby how gravely he has gone astray in citing to us the conduct of pagans who made sport of Religion and regarded it as nothing but a political secret to be kept from the people — as the rule for what Christians ought to do with regard to the divine Scriptures, which exist for the salvation of the least of those whom God calls, by a singular grace, to the true Religion.

Chapter IV Examination of the Second Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Books of Holy Scripture to Read, Because God Did Not Judge It Fitting to Declare to the People Many Mysteries Which He Kept Secret

If M. Mallet had undertaken to furnish a signal example of faulty reasoning, he could not have gone about it better. I do not exaggerate; I say this in all seriousness: I do not know whether anything comparable has ever been seen in the matter of absurdity. One cannot read his second chapter, in which he elaborates this proof, without recognizing — for anyone possessing even a little common sense — that, granting everything he says, no reasonable consequence can be drawn from it regarding the reading of the books of Moses by the Jewish people that is not directly opposed to the one he draws.

For what does he wish to prove? There is no need to guess: he says it himself in these very words — *that it could not have been the custom of the Old Testament to give the people the books of Holy Scripture to read.* And what is the premise from which he claims to derive this conclusion? Here it is.

The whole of the Old Testament, he says, passed in figures; and God spoke to His people therein of the great mysteries He was to accomplish in the fullness of time only under the obscurity of parables. For example, when He wished to signify something of the Sacrament of Baptism, which was to wash away sin; of the Eucharist, which was to be the nourishment of our souls; and of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the reward of our merits — He did not judge it fitting to declare Himself clearly on these matters, but contented Himself with proposing to them three enigmas. He made them pass through the Red Sea; He nourished them in the desert with a heavenly manna; and He gave them hope of entering the Promised Land. For, as the sacred text teaches us, the Red Sea was the figure of Baptism; the manna descended from Heaven, that of the Eucharist; and the entry into the Promised Land, that of the entry of the elect into Heaven. He goes on to say that God proposed still other enigmas to them: such as that of the Sanctuary, which was the figure of Paradise, and that of the brazen serpent, by which He wished to signify the perfect healing of the mortal wounds of our sins, which the sovereign Physician of our souls was to grant us upon the wood of the cross. In a word, he adds, *if we except certain chosen persons, to whom God spoke clearly of His mysteries and who were after His own heart, God ordinarily hid in the Old Testament the truth of His promises beneath the veil and obscurity of enigmas.*

There is nothing more true than all of this, and M. Mallet would deserve great praise if he had never written anything but the like. But what can any man of good sense conclude from it other than this: that there was therefore no cause to fear that the Jews, from whom God wished to conceal the mysteries that were not to be openly proposed until the time of the Messiah, would come to know them through the reading of the books of Moses — since they

were so thoroughly hidden beneath the veil and obscurity of parables and enigmas that, excepting certain chosen persons to whom God made them known by a particular grace, it was impossible that they should be understood by that gross and carnal people?

But M. Mallet is pleased to reason in an altogether different manner. God, he says, hid His mysteries beneath the veil and obscurity of parables and enigmas in the books of the Old Testament; therefore He did not wish the common people of the Jews to read those books, because His design was that they should not know the mysteries. Was there ever a conclusion more poorly drawn? And is it not precisely the contrary? For had these mysteries, which God did not yet wish to reveal to the Jews, been set forth clearly and without enigma in the books of the Old Testament, *then* one would have reason to say that God's design could not have been that they should be read by the Jews — because in reading them they would have discovered what He wished to conceal from them. But to conclude, from God's design of hiding His mysteries from them, that they ought not to read books in which He had expressly proposed those mysteries only under obscure enigmas, which were not to be explained until the time of the Messiah — this is in truth so strange an overturning of reason that I cannot sufficiently wonder at it.

And yet we shall see that he persists in the same aberration in the following proof, and adds to it something yet more surprising.

Chapter V Examination of the Third Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Sacred Books to Read, Because Moses Did Not Express Himself Clearly, and Spoke Only Obscurely and with Veiled Face

One can see plainly enough that this is still the same paralogism, but a coarser one — in that it rests upon a passage from St. Paul which, not merely by implication but in express terms, says the exact opposite of what M. Mallet claims.

Moses, says M. Mallet, having descended from the Mountain after conversing with God, and being obliged to speak to the people to tell them something of the great mysteries God had revealed to him, the sacred text assures us that *he covered his face and spoke to the people only with face veiled,* in order to warn them not to ask him to express himself clearly — for the word of God brought to the people was to be an obscure and veiled word. This is what led St. Paul to say that this veil of Moses had not yet been lifted in his own time, and that the Jews still had their hearts covered by it when they heard the books of the Law read — so true is it that it has been the conduct of God in the Old Testament to speak to the people with obscurity and under the veil of enigmas.

What an exclamation — and how well-timed! Who has ever doubted that it was the conduct of God in the Old Testament to speak to the people with obscurity and under the veil of enigmas? But has the same St. Paul, who revealed to us that this was figured by the veil with which Moses covered his face, also informed M. Mallet that God would have contravened His design of speaking to the Jewish people with obscurity and under the veil of enigmas, had He permitted them to read the books of Moses? That is the sole point in question; and so far is M. Mallet from having found it in St. Paul, that he found there the exact contrary. For the veil that hides from the Jews the mysteries which God willed to reveal only through the Messiah will remain upon their hearts for so long as they do not convert to Jesus Christ — however diligently they may read the books of Moses. This is what the Apostle assures us in the very passage M. Mallet cites. For *until this very day*, he says *(2 Cor. 3:14), when they read the Old Testament, the same veil remains, not lifted, because it is only removed in Christ. So to this day, whenever Moses is read to them, a veil lies over their hearts. But when their heart turns to the Lord, the veil will be taken away.*

What then is M. Mallet's blindness? He maintains that, in order for the mysteries to remain hidden from the Jews, they ought not to have been permitted to read the books of the Old Testament — and he cites in support of this a passage of St. Paul which shows that they were entirely at liberty to read them, and that, though they read them, the mysteries were no less concealed from them so long as they did not convert to Jesus Christ.

But the very signification of this veil that covered Moses's face was itself a mystery hidden from the Jews, which St. Paul has revealed to us. For what M. Mallet says of it has not the slightest foundation: that *Moses covered his face and spoke to the people only with face*

veiled, to warn them not to ask him to express himself clearly, because the word of God brought to the people was to be an obscure and veiled word. His design is plain enough. From what was particular to the Jewish people — to whom God willed to speak only through enigmas — he has sought to derive a general maxim applicable equally to the Christian people, by saying, without qualification, that *the word of God, brought to the people, must be an obscure and veiled word.* But nothing is less well founded than all of this. For it is false, on the one hand, that the Jews were to take Moses's veil as a warning he gave them not to ask him to express himself more clearly — since Scripture itself testifies that the reason he spoke to them with veiled face was that the children of Israel could not look upon his face on account of the glory and the radiance with which it shone. And St. Paul testifies, on the other hand, that this applies so little to the Christian people that the veil will even be removed from the hearts of the Jews themselves when they convert to Jesus Christ: *Cum conversus fuerit ad Dominum, auferetur velamen — When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away*.

Such is the result to which M. Mallet has reduced his first two proofs, when he summarizes them all at the end of chapter 16. But I do not know why he makes no mention there of the proof he adduces in chapter 3, since it carries at least a little more colour than the others. And this is why I shall not pass over it in silence — I have indeed already touched upon it. It consists, as we have seen, of two passages from Deuteronomy, both from chapter 31.

In the first of these, it is said that the Levites had received God's command to place the book of the Law beside the Ark of the Covenant. This can serve him nothing, unless he would conclude from it that the book of the Law existed only in that one place, and that the common people of the Jews therefore had no means of reading it — which would be a ridiculous falsehood. For this proves only that the original of the book of the Law had been placed, by Moses's command, beside the Ark; it does not prove that copies had not been made from it, which could be read by Priests and people alike.

By the other passage, the Priests are commanded to read the book of the Law in the sabbatical years — otherwise called the years of remission, which came only once in seven years — at the feast of Tabernacles, before all the people, men and women, children and strangers alike, so that hearing it they might learn to fear the Lord. From this M. Mallet concludes that *it was the will of Moses to make the Priests the custodians of his books and to forbid the people all knowledge of them except through the Priests' ministry.* Why does he not then conclude as well that it was the will of Moses that the Jews should hear speak of the law of God, and of all the ordinances they were obliged to observe under such heavy penalties, only once in seven years? If he would not dare to avow that conclusion — not only because it is ridiculous in itself, but because it is manifestly contrary to what St. James says in the Acts of the Apostles *(Acts 15:21)*, that *from ancient times Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath day in the synagogues* — let him then acknowledge that, as it would be a Sophist's trick which he would condemn in another, to turn a simply affirmative proposition into an exclusive one containing a tacit negation, by wishing to treat as equivalent these two

propositions — *the one:* the Priests were commanded to read the books of Moses once every seven years at the feast of Tabernacles before all the people, men and women, children and strangers; *the other:* it was only on that day and once in seven years that the books of Moses were read to all the Jews without distinction of age or sex — so too let him acknowledge that he commits the same sophism when he maintains that it is the same thing to command the Priests to read the books of Moses to the people, and to forbid the people from reading them: as though it were contradictory to hear them read when they were read in the Synagogues and to read them oneself — so as to better retain what one had heard. If M. Mallet has not enough common sense to see how ridiculous this is, one cannot supply him with it. But one may at least inform him that St. Chrysostom did not find it to be any sign that the Laity ought not to read the Holy Scriptures in their own homes, that they are read to them in Church — since at the same time as he exhorts them to attend diligently and to listen with care to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, he also exhorts them to read them in their homes.

He is no more reasonable in what he adduces from the Prophet Malachi: that *the lips of the Priest shall keep Knowledge, and it is from his mouth that they shall seek to learn it.* This is still the same sophism. He presents as contradictory two things that go together very well: to read Holy Scripture in order to nourish and edify oneself by it, and to consult the Priests in the difficulties one encounters there — or to listen to what the Priests say of it in their sermons, and then to read it oneself in order to better retain the instruction one has received and to make use of it in ordering one's life. Is this not what happens in every branch of knowledge? And who has ever believed that, because we need a teacher to explain the books that treat of a subject, we ought not to be permitted to read those books ourselves — whether before they are explained to us, in order to gain a first acquaintance with them, or after they have been explained, in order to fix what we have learned more firmly in our minds?

There was therefore never a more absurd conclusion than M. Mallet's: *The Jews were to seek knowledge of the Law from the mouths of the Priests; therefore they had not the liberty to read the Sacred Books.* And yet he is not the only one to make use of this wretched proof — so greatly do prejudice and false zeal disorder the judgment and lead one to reason perversely.

Chapter VI Examination of the Fourth Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Books of Holy Scripture to Read, Because It Is Very Probable That the Books of the Law Were Not Composed in the Vernacular Language of the Jews

Were this book to have appeared without an author's name, one would be tempted to believe it the work of a freethinker who had set out to sow in the world a great many novel opinions — opinions which, once received, would be highly suited to weakening the proofs employed to persuade those unhappy enough to doubt it of the truth of Religion. Is not what we have already seen in the first chapter — namely, that the mysteries of Religion, both Jewish and Christian, ought to have been concealed from the people, because the Romans, the greatest statesmen in the world, acted in this manner — capable of insensibly suggesting to men's minds that impious notion that all Religions are nothing but inventions of statecraft? But what M. Mallet says here can only serve to demolish the strongest argument available for confirming the truth of the Religion which God established through Moses. For everything depends upon showing that the miracles which these books record God as having worked through that Prophet truly came to pass. Now what reasonable means can there be to doubt it, when one sees Moses calling to mind these wonders in Deuteronomy and taking as his witnesses an incredible multitude of men and women who had themselves seen them?

But how greatly this argument would lose its force were one to suppose, as M. Mallet maintains it to be highly probable, that Moses did not write these books in the vernacular language of the Jews but in a language unknown to them — and that it is from this he concludes that the common people of the Jews could not read them! A freethinker could then say: he was therefore able to write whatever he wished in his books, without the people being able to contradict him, since he had expressly written them in a language the people did not understand — and by this means cast suspicion of falsehood upon his entire conduct.

But thanks be to God, this can cause little harm; for nothing is more contrary to common sense, nor further from all likelihood, than this ridiculous supposition of M. Mallet's — that the books of Moses were written in a language unknown to the common people of the Jews. One need only examine the proofs he adduces in order to be convinced of it. Here is the principal one, which I shall reduce to the form of a syllogism so that it may be better judged.

A Grammar presupposes an unknown language — for it is unheard-of, says he in his own terms, that one should learn by rules and principles the language of one's own country.

Now Moses, in giving the books of the Law, composed at the same time a Hebrew Grammar to teach the Jews the language in which they were written — as Clement of Alexandria assures us on the testimony of Eupolemus, who says in his book on the Kings of Judaea that Moses was the first wise man, and was the first to compose a Grammar for the use of the Jews.

Therefore there is much reason to suppose that Moses composed his books in a language unknown to the people.

And consequently it was his intention that the people should not read his books — and thus it could not have been the custom of the Old Testament to give the people the books of Holy Scripture to read.

This argument is worthy of M. Mallet: there is nothing in it — neither major premise, nor minor premise, nor conclusion — that is not false.

The major premise is false. What leads him to say that it is unheard-of to learn by rules and principles the language of one's own country is his belief that whatever is unheard-of to him must be unheard-of to all the world — as though the whole world were obliged to be ignorant of what M. Mallet himself does not know. Let him learn, then, what he did not yet know when he was writing the chapter we are examining — for he may have learned it since, from a passage he himself cites from M. Lizet — that the Greeks and Romans had Grammar masters to teach their children by rules and principles the languages of their own country; that it was with Grammar, as Quintilian observes, that one began at Rome to train orators; that it is of the rules of Grammar that he says one ought not to spend too much time on them or give too much attention to them, but be content to learn them in passing without dwelling on them — *non obstante hac disciplina per illas euntibus, sed in illis haerentibus* — and finally, that St. Augustine composed a Latin Grammar at the very time he was preparing himself for Baptism, which assuredly was intended only for those who had already learned that language from their nurses.

The minor premise is no less false. For it is a fantasy that Moses composed a Grammar for the use of the Jews. M. Mallet imagined this only because he absurdly supposed that these words of Clement of Alexandria, which he cites in Latin — *Eupolemus dicit Mosen Grammaticam primum tradidisse Judaeis* — signified that Moses had composed a Grammar for the use of the Jews; whereas, had he read this passage in the original, where it says — γραμματικὴν πρῶτον Ἰουδαίοις παραδεῖναι, καὶ παρὰ Ἰουδαίων Φοίνικας παραλαβεῖν, Ἕλληνας δὲ παρὰ Φοινίκων — he would have recognised that it means only that Moses was to the Jews, and the Jews to the Phoenicians, what the Phoenicians were to the Greeks: that is to say, that he taught them the art of writing — the art of letters, which are called *grammata* in Greek. And this is so evidently the true meaning that M. Mallet himself cites this same passage in two other places in his book in this latter sense. For on page 62 he cites this passage from Eusebius's *Evangelical Preparation*: *We read in Eupolemus that Moses was a very wise man and that he was the first to give letters to the Jews.* And on page 64 he cites another from a Commentator on St. Augustine's *City of God*: *Moses was the author of the Hebrew letters. This is what Eupolemus, Artapanus, and other pagan authors have written — that Moses was a very wise man, and that he invented the letters he gave to the Jews.* Moreover, even were this perfectly well established, it would not follow that the language Moses spoke, or in which he wrote his books, was different from that spoken by the Jewish people — but only

that the Jews before Moses were as the Greeks before Cadmus: people who spoke their language but could not write it, as were also all the peoples of America, each of whom spoke their own language without any of them knowing how to write it.

The conclusion has this peculiarity: that even if the major and minor premises were true, it would still be false. For if it were true, as M. Mallet supposes, that Moses in giving the Jews the books of the Law had at the same time composed a Hebrew Grammar to teach them the language in which his books were written — then he had no intention of preventing the people from knowing his books; and yet that is precisely what M. Mallet wishes to conclude from it, so great is his inclination to reason perversely.

M. Mallet's other proof is of the same character — that is to say, it is admirably suited to ruin what he wishes to establish. He refers us to certain authors whom he is pleased not to name, and here is how he makes them speak: It is true, say they, that Moses wrote his books in Hebrew, and that the Hebrew language was then the vernacular of the Jews. But since his books were written in the purity of that language, it by no means follows that the language of the books of Moses was at that time the language of the Hebrews: on the contrary there is some ground for presuming that the people then spoke a corrupted language, and that Hebrew in its purity was a language tolerably unknown to them.

Were an Iroquois or a Tupinambá to speak in this fashion, one would not be surprised. But who can comprehend that a man of some sixty years or thereabouts, who ought to know what passes in the world and what has always passed there in matters of language, should come and tell us as a highly probable thing that when the same language is spoken by some in its purity and by others in a corrupted manner, the former will not be understood by the latter — and that books written in the purity of a language are riddles to those who speak that same language badly?

Does he not know how much easier it is to understand a language than to speak it, and that a hundred thousand persons understand Latin perfectly well who would have great difficulty speaking it, or who would speak it only very poorly?

Does he not know, in the second place, that those who speak a language in its purity are understood without difficulty by those who speak it badly, and that it is those who speak it purely who have a little more difficulty understanding those who speak it in a corrupted form? A Picard understands a Parisian with ease; but a Parisian does not understand a Picard's speech so readily.

Does he not know, finally, that when a language is foreign to us and we do not have a perfect command of it, we understand what we read in it far more easily than what is said to us by word of mouth?

Does he wish for something still more obvious? Can he deny that in the towns of Normandy, of Picardy, of Languedoc, of Guienne, and of the Walloon provinces of the Low Countries, the

common people speak a very bad French, quite different from that spoken at Court? And yet, should the most polished Court preacher go there to preach, would he not be understood? And do not the women there read devotional books written in the best French? Does he need more than this to compel him to acknowledge that — since he himself grants that the Hebrew spoken by Moses, and in which he wrote his books, was the vernacular language of all the Jews, but that Moses spoke it in its purity while the common people of the Jews spoke it very badly — this difference ought by no means to have prevented the common people of the Jews from understanding Moses when he spoke to them, still less from being able to read the books he left them, so that they should not forget what he had told them on God's behalf?

But is it necessary to refute so extravagant a thing? And can it be reconciled, by anyone of even a little common sense, with the manner in which Moses conducted himself with the Jews? Deuteronomy, for example, is nothing but a recounting of what Moses said to the people of Israel before leaving them, God having foretold him that he would die and that it would not be he who would lead his people into the Promised Land. Did he not speak to them in Hebrew in its purity? They therefore understood Hebrew in its purity — the very same Hebrew which M. Mallet wishes to represent as a language unknown to the Jewish people. For he will not say that Moses spoke to them with the intention that they should not understand him — as he dares to say that he left them books of their Religion written expressly in such a manner that they should be able to understand nothing in them.

Will he reduce himself to saying that Moses spoke to them in corrupted Hebrew in order to make himself understood, but then wrote down in a different kind of Hebrew the discourses he had made to them, so that they could not read them? Would he dare to attribute to Moses so bizarre a course of conduct — one so capable of arousing ill suspicions against him in a people so prone to revolt, and which so plausible a pretext might well have stirred to seditions like those of Dathan and Korah? But why did Moses speak to them, and why did he write down what he had said to them, if not to renew more fully in the minds of that hardened people the memory of the wonders God had worked in their favour, and of the obligation they were under to devote themselves to His service? Why then, having been willing for the people to understand what he said to them, would he have been unwilling for them to read the very same things he left them in writing?

I am ashamed to dwell upon such extravagances. I shall say only one word about his final point — the Canticle — because it furnishes a demonstrative proof that M. Mallet calls probable the thing in all the world most visibly false. For there is nothing in all the books of Moses written more nobly or in a more elevated style than that great Canticle, which he commanded the Jews to write out and learn by heart, and to sing often, so that it might serve as a witness against them should they abandon the worship of God. He therefore certainly supposed they would understand it, since his intention was that in singing it they should be moved by it. And I say the same of all the rest of the Law — since Moses himself records in

chapter 32 of Deuteronomy that he spoke *to all the children of Israel*, in words that form the conclusion of all the discourses he had made to them in giving a new promulgation of the Law:

> *Set your hearts upon all the words which I testify among you this day; which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this Law. For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.*
>
> *Complevitque omnes sermones istos loquens ad universum Israel, et dixit ad eos: Ponite corda vestra in omnia verba quae ego testificor hodie; ut mandetis ea filiis vestris custodire et facere, et implere universa quae scripta sunt legis hujus, quia non incassum praecepta sunt vobis, sed ut singuli in eis viverent.*

Is this the speech of a man who had intended that the things he had written should not be read by the greater part of those whom he so strictly commanded to observe them?

Chapter VII Examination of the Fifth and Sixth Proofs: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Books of Holy Scripture to Read — Because It Is Quite Certain That Among the Sacred Books Several Were Written in Languages Unknown to the People, and Because the Jews Went More Than Six Hundred Years Without Having Any Book of Scripture in Their Mother Tongue

I join these two proofs together because they rest upon nothing but the same hypothesis: namely, that the Hebrew language ceased to be the vernacular of the Jews after the Babylonian captivity, having been replaced by the language called Chaldaean, or Syriac, or Jerusalemite — because it was the tongue spoken in Jerusalem.

From this supposition Mallet derives his fifth proof: that the books of the three last Prophets — Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi — having been written in Hebrew, as were also the book of Esther, Ecclesiasticus, and the First Book of Maccabees, they could not have been understood by the Jewish people. And for his sixth, that the return from the Babylonian captivity having preceded the birth of Our Lord by six hundred years, the Jews went throughout that whole long time without having the books of the Law in their mother tongue.

But both of these proofs suffer from two essential defects.

For all that this could possibly prove is that the Jews might have been rendered incapable of reading the Sacred Books by an extraordinary accident — namely, the change of their language — and not by any ordinance either of Moses or of their Doctors. Now I maintain two things: first, that even were this so, it is not what is at issue; and second, that it is not true that the common people of the Jews were in the condition he describes. These are the two points to be examined.

I say therefore, as regards the first, that M. Mallet undertook to prove that it was never the custom of the Old Testament to give the people the books of Holy Scripture to read, and that the will of Moses was to forbid them its reading. But the change of language that occurred after the Babylonian captivity proves this in no manner whatsoever. For, first: was it Moses, or the Prophets who followed him, who willed that the language should be changed, so that the people might not be able to read the books of the Law? Second: this very supposition implies that the people *did* read these books when they could understand them — since it required a change of language before they could read them no longer. Third, and finally: it is two very different things that the people should be unable to read what they could not understand on account of the change of language, and that they should be forbidden to read it — whether they understood it or not. It is the latter that is at issue, not the former.

An example will make all of this clear. If someone were to undertake to prove that it has always been the Church's intention that the people should understand nothing of what is said

in the Liturgies and the rest of public worship, could he do so by arguing that, since the languages in which public worship was first instituted — such as Latin in the West, Greek in the East, ancient Armenian in Armenia, ancient Ethiopic in the Kingdom of Ethiopia, Syriac in Mesopotamia, which were then the vernacular languages of those regions — have ceased to be so, the people no longer understand what is said in the Liturgies? No, certainly — as is clear from the response Cardinal du Perron makes in his *Reply*, last Book, chapter I, to the reproach that the King of England levelled against Catholics for making use of a language unknown to the people in public worship. For he acknowledges that formerly the people understood what was said in the Liturgies, and that if they no longer do so, this has come about not through any design the Church had to deprive the people of the knowledge of what is said in public worship, but for other reasons which he explains and of which I may speak elsewhere.

Nothing is easier than to apply this to the present subject, and to show that just as the change that came about in the vernacular languages in which the Church's public worship had first been instituted is no proof that the Church is content for the people to understand nothing of it — since, on the contrary, she entirely approves of their doing whatever they can to understand even today what that change has made less intelligible to them — so too the change that came about in the Hebrew language after the Babylonian captivity proves no more that the Jewish Priests and Doctors were content for the people not to read the Sacred Books, having always approved of their doing whatever they could to understand them. And this was not so difficult as M. Mallet imagines, as we shall see in the following chapter.

Chapter VIII Clarification of Several False Conclusions Which M. Mallet Draws from the Change of the Hebrew Language into Syriac

In order to understand properly the falsity of M. Mallet's conclusions, six or seven observations must be made.

I. The first is that the Syriac language, which in the usage of the Jewish people succeeded the Hebrew, is the Chaldaean tongue spoken at Babylon — which was, however, common also to the Syrians and Assyrians, as may be seen from the fact that from the same Hebrew word *Aram*, signifying the peoples of Syria because they descended from Aram, son of Shem, is formed the word *Aramith*, which designates not only the language spoken by the Syrians but also that spoken by the Assyrians and Chaldaeans alike. The former is evident from the petition the Jews make to Rabshakeh in 2 Kings 18:26 and Isaiah 36:11, asking him to speak to them in Syriac because they understood that language well — expressing this with the words *Loquere nobis Aramice*, which the Septuagint renders as *Συριστί*, and St. Jerome as *Syriacè* and *Syra lingua*. The latter is proved by what is said in Daniel 1:4 — that he and his companions were made to learn the language of the Chaldaeans — and in Daniel 2:4, where it is said of the wise men whom Nebuchadnezzar summoned to explain his dream that they spoke to him *Aramice*, rendered again as *Συριστί* by the Septuagint and as *Syriacè* by St. Jerome. And there can be no doubt that this was the Chaldaean tongue, since Daniel himself, wishing to report the exact words of these wise men and all that passed thereafter between them, his companions, and that King, reports it all in Chaldaean.

It is therefore indubitable that the Syriac and Chaldaean languages were originally one and the same tongue, which is found in its purity in six chapters of Daniel — from chapter two, beginning at verse four, through to the end of chapter seven — and in several chapters of First Ezra, from the eighth verse of chapter four through to verse 27 of chapter seven. But everyone agrees that the language which became vernacular among the Jews after the return from captivity was not purely Chaldaean but a mixture of Chaldaean and Hebrew; and it is for this reason that it is always called *Hebrew* throughout the New Testament — John 5:2, 19:13 and 17, Luke 23:38, Acts 21:40, 22:2, 26:14. To which must be added that it underwent yet further change thereafter, so that the Syriac of the version of the New Testament is not altogether the same as the tongue spoken in Judaea at the time of Jesus Christ and the Apostles.

II. Even had the Jews spoken nothing but this new language after their return from Babylonian captivity, it would not follow that they had lost all understanding of the ancient tongue, which had so many words in common with the new one, or at least very similar to it. Such changes of language do not happen all at once, and it is almost impossible that before the new language has entirely prevailed, there should not be a certain time — and indeed a fairly long one — during which both languages are understood by almost everyone. This must have been how it came about in the change from Latin to French: for French began to form itself before St. Bernard's time, since I believe there are French writings from that period, and

there are certainly some from shortly after, as appears from the history of Villehardouin. Yet one cannot doubt that in that Father's time Latin was still commonly understood by almost everyone — for it was the language in which he wrote to men and women of all conditions, and in which he preached to all his Religious, among whom there were said to be four hundred Lay Brothers who were for the most part nothing but artisans or peasants converted to God. It is therefore a sophism on M. Mallet's part to suppose that the common people of the Jews, after the captivity of Babylon, no longer understood the Hebrew in which the Sacred Books are written — because a new language began to form at that time which drew heavily upon Hebrew. For there is no reason to doubt that in St. Bernard's time the common people spoke the Old French that we see in Villehardouin, and yet Latin was still understood nonetheless.

III. *It is impossible to say with certainty when the ancient Hebrew language ceased to be understood by the common people of the Jews. But there is much evidence to show that this did not happen as soon as is commonly thought.*

First: the last chapters of the Book of Daniel were written in the third year of Cyrus — that is, two years after the return from captivity. And the most plausible reason that can be given for why Daniel, having begun by writing in Hebrew, then wrote in Chaldaean from verse four of chapter two through to the end of chapter seven, and then returned to Hebrew in the final chapters — some of which were written after the return from captivity — is the one given by Grotius: that *what is written in Chaldaean concerned principally the Chaldaeans, and what is written in Hebrew concerned principally the Jews.* Now this would have no plausibility whatsoever if at that time the Jews had already forgotten their language and no longer understood it — for in that case it would have been far better for Daniel to have continued writing in Chaldaean, which was, on the supposition, the vernacular of the Jews.

Second: the Book of Esther cannot have been written before the reign of Darius son of Hystaspes, at least twenty-eight years after the return from captivity. Why then would Mordecai, who is believed to be its author, have written it in Hebrew — he who lived at Susa in Persia — if the Jews for whom he wrote it, and whom he commanded to celebrate a new feast, had by that time no knowledge whatever of the Hebrew language?

Third: the First Book of Ezra covers a history of eighty-two years, from the first year of Cyrus to the twentieth of Artaxerxes Longimanus. And the second, which is also called Nehemiah because Nehemiah is its author, extends to more than a hundred years after the return from captivity. Why would both have written in Hebrew rather than in Chaldaean — as indeed three or four chapters of First Ezra do, where the concern is with the opposition mounted against the Jews by the officers of the King of Persia, who spoke that language — if the Jews by then no longer understood Hebrew?

Fourth: the same holds for the three last Prophets, whose books contain very beautiful prophecies concerning the Messiah which it was of the highest importance for the Jews to know, and of whom the last, Malachi, wrote more than ninety years after the return from

captivity. What likelihood is there that they wrote in Hebrew if that language was by then unknown to the Jews? For one cannot say it was out of reverence for the Hebrew tongue, since that reason ought equally to have prevented Daniel from writing a great part of his book in Chaldaean, and Ezra several chapters of his.

Fifth: I am astonished that all those who have assumed the Jews ceased to speak their ancient language immediately after the return from Babylon did not at least put to themselves, as a difficulty requiring an answer, what is said in the second book of Ezra, final chapter, verse twenty-four — that the children of the Jews who had married foreign women spoke *Azotice* and were unable to speak *Judaice*. The Hebrew has *Ashdodith* and *Yehudit*. For it must be noted that this same word *Yehudit* is contrasted with *Aramith* in 2 Kings 18:26, where the Latin reads: *Precamur ut loquaris nobis Syriacè, et non loquaris nobis Judaicè* — and that *Aramith*, in First Ezra 4:7, signifies the Chaldaean or Syriac language, just as it does in 2 Kings and Daniel 2 — the language that succeeded the *Yehudit*, which was spoken before the captivity. Now if it were already this Syriac or Chaldaean that the Jews ordinarily spoke in Nehemiah's time, he would have said of these children born of marriages with foreign women that they spoke *Ashdodith* and did not know how to speak *Aramith* — since, according to what these authors suppose, the Jews of that time spoke *Aramith*, that is Syriac, and no longer spoke *Yehudit*, meaning the language that word certainly signifies in 2 Kings 18:26, 2 Chronicles 32:18, and Isaiah 36:11. And what seems to me to strengthen this proof further is that the second book of Ezra, in which this is reported, is itself written in Hebrew — that is, in the language called *Yehudit* in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah. It therefore seems that Nehemiah wished to indicate that these children did not speak the language of the Jews in which he was writing, which I do not see could have been called anything other than *Yehudit* — and there is little likelihood he meant to indicate by it that they did not speak the language called *Aramith* in First Ezra chapter four, which is visibly contrasted with the language in which the first three chapters of that book are written, as well as the chapters after the end of the seventh. In a word: is it credible that the same Syriac language should be called both *Aramith* and *Yehudit* in the same book, according to the Jews? For the Jews counted the two books of Ezra as one, as St. Jerome attests in his Preface on the books of Kings.

Such are the reasons which may lead one to believe that the Jews did not so quickly cease to speak and understand their ancient language. But this does not prevent them from having had, during the captivity, knowledge and use of the Chaldaean language as well — there being no impossibility in the same people speaking and understanding two different languages, their own and that of the country in which they are held captive.

IV. But whatever time it may have been when the common people of the Jews ceased to understand the ancient Hebrew, one must not imagine — as M. Mallet does — that they thereby lost all means of reading Holy Scripture. For God provided for this by means of the versions He caused to be made at that time. The Septuagint, of which we shall speak presently, became so celebrated that it almost obliterated the memory of the others, above all

among Christians in the West. But the Syrians maintain that the translation they have of the Old Testament in their language was made before Christ. They produce no other proof than the tradition of their churches; but it is certain that they possess one that is believed to be very ancient, made from the Hebrew text and not from the Greek, which has been followed by all the authors of all the other Oriental translations. This conformity with the Hebrew appears principally in the Psalms and in several other books.

It is not plausible what some of them say — that it was made in Solomon's time at the request of King Hiram. But here is what may have been the origin of this ancient translation. When the Hebrew language had begun to be little understood, after the reading of the Hebrew text in the Synagogues, each verse was explained in the vernacular, which was then Chaldaean. And since it would have been dangerous to leave each reader the liberty of translating Holy Scripture in his own fashion, these renderings were set down in writing by public authority — of which no greater proof could be desired than the fact that there still exist today ancient copies of these Chaldaean versions after each Hebrew verse. The Chaldaean language being almost the same as the Syriac, it was very easy for the Jews dispersed in Syria to adapt it to their use; and thus this version, having undergone some modifications according to the differences between these two languages, has come down to us as it now stands. This is what very able scholars in the Oriental languages believe. Others prove the existence of a Chaldaean version of the Bible before Christ from a passage in Philo, in the second book of his Life of Moses, where he says that the Law was translated by the Seventy from Chaldaean into Greek. But since there is no likelihood that they did not translate from the Hebrew original, Philo must have taken Chaldaean for Hebrew — as also appears from what he had said earlier, that the Law was from the beginning written in Chaldaean (τὸ παλαιὸν ἐγράφησαν οἱ νόμοι γλώσσῃ χαλδαικῇ) and remained long in that language, during which time its beauty was unknown to foreigners. By which it is plain that he meant to signify the first language in which the books of Moses were originally written — and therefore Hebrew.

V. It is very strange that M. Mallet, who delivers a lengthy discourse to show that the Chaldaean Paraphrase gave the Jews no means of reading the Sacred Books, should not have said a single word in that place about the Septuagint — which he was far more obliged to reckon with had he acted with even a little good faith. For wishing to prove that the Jews, during the six hundred years between the Babylonian captivity and Christ, had no book of Scripture in their mother tongue, he would either have had to believe that the Septuagint was made after Christ — which cannot be attributed to him — or else have not known that during that interval the Greek language was the mother tongue of an infinite number of Jews dispersed throughout the world. This would be an ignorance hardly less remarkable. For who does not know that since the conquests of Alexander, the Greeks having mastered all of Asia as far as India, their language spread everywhere and became more common in most of those countries than the languages previously spoken there? And since Judaea had been subject to that Greek Empire, there can be no doubt that Greek had also become a very common language there. This is evident from the two books of Maccabees, where the Jews, having daily

dealings with the governors of the Kings of Syria, there is every likelihood they conducted these in Greek. But there is an indubitable proof of it in the martyrdom of the seven brothers, recounted in the second book of Maccabees, chapter 7. For what shows that all the exchanges between them and King Antiochus took place in Greek is that their mother, wishing to mock the King who was pressing her to urge the last of her sons to yield to what was desired of him, is noted by the historian as having spoken to him *in the language of the country — patria voce* — that is, in Syriac; which is manifest proof that everything said up to that point had been said in Greek.

VI. It must further be observed that the Jews, having multiplied greatly since the captivity, a very large number of them were outside Palestine, dispersed throughout Egypt and various provinces of Asia — as appears from what is said in Acts 2 that they had come from all those places to celebrate the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem; whence also St. Paul was from Tarsus in Cilicia, and St. Barnabas from the island of Cyprus. Now all these Jews who did not live in Palestine had Greek as their mother tongue, whence indeed they are called Hellenists, because they read the Bible in Greek and conducted all the exercises of their Religion in that language. This is further confirmed by what is said in Acts 6 — that there arose a murmuring of the Greek Jews against the Hebrew Jews: *Ἑλληνιστῶν πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους.*

VII. Finally, the example of the Jews of today ought to have taught M. Mallet that books of Religion can be commonly read by the greater part of a people even when they are not written in that people's vernacular. For Hebrew is the vernacular language of none of the Jews who are presently in the world. German is the vernacular of the Jews of Germany; French of those of Metz; Italian of those of Italy; Polish or Slavonic of those of Poland. Will anyone conclude from this that they do not read the Scriptures of the Old Testament in the original language — because it is not their vernacular tongue?

Chapter IX Examination of the Seventh Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Book of Holy Scripture to Read, Because It Is Probable That Moses Wrote His Books with New Characters Which He Invented Expressly, So That the Common People Could Not Read Them

This is the same impiety as that of the fourth proof, and one which has already been refuted in advance. For since Moses, speaking to all the people of Israel, commanded them to write out his Canticle and to learn it by heart, it follows that either the Canticle was written in different characters from all the rest of the Law — which is a ridiculous notion — or else the books of the Law were written in characters known to the people.

But let us see how M. Mallet goes about lending probability to this paradox. He treats it in his ninth chapter, which begins as follows: *It was so far from Moses's intention to make his books popular and to place them in the hands of the common people that he could not even have purposed this, if it is true what certain Historians say — that the Hebrews at that time did not know how to read or write, that they did not yet have letters and characters for their use, and that it was Moses who was the inventor of the Hebrew letters.*

One must acknowledge that M. Mallet has a most particular art of drawing conclusions that no one else would ever think of drawing. For who would have believed the following conclusion to be reasonable? Moses, according to several authors, invented the Hebrew letters, the Jews before him not knowing how to read or write: therefore he could not have had any thought of making his books popular and placing them in the hands of the common people. By the same reasoning one would have to argue about Cadmus that he could not have had any thought that the books the Greeks would write would become popular and be placed in the hands of the common people — because before him the Greeks did not know how to read or write, and it was he who taught them that art. If this absurdity does not strike everyone immediately, I do not know how to make it more palpable. M. Mallet must doubtless have supposed one or the other of two things, though he has not expressed them: either that one who does not know how to read or write can never learn to do so; or that Moses took particular care to prevent the Jews from learning to read what he had written for their instruction. But the misfortune for him is that he himself establishes precisely the contrary. For he cites with approval what St. Augustine says in the *City of God*, Book XVIII, chapter 39: *Augustine observes*, says he, *that Moses gave schoolmasters to the people of God to teach them the letters whose knowledge was necessary for them to read the Sacred Books.* Even had Moses invented new letters in which to write the books of the Law, this was not done — as M. Mallet pretends — so that the common people could not read them; since, according to St. Augustine (whom he himself cites to confirm what he had said), it was Moses himself who gave the people of God schoolmasters to teach them the letters whose knowledge was necessary for reading the Sacred Books. But instead of this passage opening his eyes, he does not even notice that it overturns everything he wished to establish; and he ends his chapter in

the same error in which he began it, by saying: *That it is perhaps because of this example of Moses that his successors and the wisest among the Hebrews judged it fitting to change, from time to time, the characters of Holy Scripture, and to invent new ones, so as to take away the knowledge of it from those who might abuse it — that is to say, from the people.* This, he says, *it is necessary to examine, in order to show how far removed was the spirit of God in the Old Testament from making the Sacred Books popular and placing them in everyone's hands.* Let us therefore follow him in this examination — that is: let us continue to uncover his falsehoods and his fantasies.

Chapter X Examination of the Eighth Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Books of Holy Scripture to Read, Because from Time to Time New Characters Were Invented in Order to Make Their Reading Impossible for Those Unworthy of It — That Is to Say, for the Common People

M. Mallet marks two such changes of script. One in the time of Rehoboam, and another in the time of Ezra. But he does not insist upon the first, and he is right not to. For it rests upon nothing but a passage from Genebrard, who allowed himself to be deceived by a Rabbi from whom he took this fable: that the Jews, in the time of Rehoboam, so as to have no commerce in matters of Religion with the schismatics of the ten Tribes, changed the form of their letters, abandoning the Samaritan characters and adopting the square ones. Even were this so, M. Mallet could draw no advantage from it — for according to Genebrard and his Rabbi, the reason for this change would not have been to prevent pious Israelites from reading the Sacred Books, but only to separate themselves thereby from those who had made a schism. And the story has no plausibility at all; for the Kings of Judah had, on the contrary, every interest in having the Israelites of the ten Tribes read the Sacred Books, in order to see there the condemnation of their sacrilegious separation from the temple of God. And thus everything reduces itself to the change of characters that took place after the Babylonian captivity — of which M. Mallet speaks in these terms in his chapter 12:

> *It must be that Ezra's thoughts were very far removed from those of certain persons of our time who wish Holy Scripture to be translated into all manner of languages so that everyone may read it — since this Prophet, who was inspired by God and who could have presented the Sacred Books in a manner suited to the people's use, preferred nonetheless to take away from them all knowledge of it by writing it in newly invented letters which could be read only by the learned, in such a way that the common people could understand nothing therein.*

In this discourse there is one certain fact, and one divination on M. Mallet's part that is not only uncertain but entirely false and injurious to Ezra. The certain fact — one which there was no need to learn from this Doctor — is that the Hebrew characters we have today, and which existed in the time of Our Lord, are not the same as those in which the Bible was written before the Babylonian captivity. *It is certain*, says St. Jerome in his Prologue on the books of Kings, *that after the Temple was rebuilt under Zerubbabel, Ezra, Doctor of the Law, found other letters which are still in use today. For until that time the Samaritans and the Hebrews had the same characters.* This is ordinarily proved by the fact that ancient Jewish coins still survive on which one sees these first characters, called Samaritan because they were retained by the peoples whom the Kings of Assyria had settled in the city of Samaria and in other places of the Kingdom of Israel — of whom it is said in 2 Kings 17 that they mingled the worship of their false gods with that of the true God.

There is no better proof of this than the Pentateuch called Samaritan — because it was in use among those peoples — which is written in these ancient characters, in which Father Morin also had it printed in M. Le Jay's Bible, as it was subsequently printed in the same form in the English Polyglots. Now these characters are very different from the Hebrew of today. And proof that these ancient letters, afterwards called Samaritan, were not those in use in the time of Our Lord is provided by what He says in Matthew 5:18: *one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law until all be fulfilled*. For it appears thereby that in the time of Christ, the *yod* — which corresponds to the Greek iota — was a very small letter, as it still is today in the Hebrew alphabet, which is why St. Irenaeus calls it a half-letter. Whereas it is exactly the contrary in the Samaritan alphabet, where the *yod* is one of the largest letters, resembling our *m* and having three downstrokes. It is therefore agreed that the ancient letters in which the Sacred Books were written were changed for new ones, and that it was Ezra who was the author of this change — either, as Eusebius believed, in order to have less commerce with the Samaritans who had retained the ancient characters; or rather, because these new letters being those of the Chaldaeans, to which the Jews had grown accustomed during the seventy years of their captivity, he had judged it fitting to adopt them in order to make the reading of Holy Scripture easier for the people.

But M. Mallet is pleased, without the slightest proof and without the authority of anyone whatsoever, to put forward a reason entirely contrary to this — insisting that Ezra invented altogether new letters, whereas all scholars agree that he took those already in use among the Assyrians and Chaldaeans; and that he did so moreover in order to prevent the people from being able to read the Sacred Books. And as if this chimera he has lodged in his mind were a truth acknowledged by the whole world, he boldly concludes — as we have already seen — that *Ezra's thoughts must have been very far removed from those who would wish Holy Scripture to be translated into all manner of languages so that everyone might read it, since, being able to present the Sacred Books in a manner suited to the people's use, he preferred to take away from them all knowledge of it by writing it in newly invented letters which could be read only by the learned*. Yet it is another fantasy to imagine that even had these letters been newly invented, this would have made it impossible for the people to read the Sacred Books. For these letters were from Ezra's time in common use among the Jews for all manner of writing, and were not reserved for the writing of the holy Books alone. It would therefore have also been necessary for Ezra to have enacted a law forbidding the common people of the Jews to learn to read — for whoever knew how to read anything whatsoever necessarily knew how to read the books of the Law and the Prophets as well, which were written in no other characters than the most common books. Nothing therefore is more ill-founded than what he builds upon the true or false supposition of newly invented letters, as a means of making it impossible for the common people of the Jews to read the Holy Scriptures.

But upon whom does M. Mallet bestow this intention of reducing the people of God to an inability to read the Law that God had given them — commanding them to have it continually in hand to observe it, before their eyes to read it, and in their mouths to repeat it, as is said in

Exodus 13? Who does he make the author of a design full of an odious malignity, one that could only have been tolerable among pagans who regarded Religion as a secret of statecraft? None other than the holy man Ezra — that is to say, perhaps of all the great figures of the ancient Law the one least deserving of such an injury; for there is none, judging by what we find in Scripture, who took such care to read Holy Scripture to the people and to have it read to them — as what has been said in the examination of the sixth proof ought to convince all reasonable persons.

Chapter XI Examination of the Ninth Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Books of Holy Scripture to Read, Because These Books Were So Scarce That in the Time of King Josiah They Were Brought to That Prince as a Novel Discovery

It is in his thirteenth chapter that M. Mallet expands upon this ninth proof. Before coming to the book found in the Temple in the time of Josiah, he proves the scarcity of the Sacred Books by another means. *I would not need*, he says, *in order to establish my third proposition touching the scarcity of the Sacred Books in the Old Testament, to adduce any other proofs than those that result from the Hebrew letters invented by the wisest among the Jews in the time of Rehoboam, or by Ezra of whom we have just spoken. For if these books had been so common and in everyone's hands as our adversaries claim, it would have been ridiculous to imagine that one could take away the knowledge of them from the Samaritans by writing them in characters unknown to those peoples — just as if today in France one were to undertake to prevent the English from having Holy Scripture, of which they possess an infinite number of copies, by having it printed in this Kingdom only in French characters, which are unknown to the English.*

I do not know where M. Mallet gets all of this; but it is difficult to say more impertinent things.

First: he misrepresents those he calls his adversaries. For it has never been said that in the time of the Old Testament the Sacred Books were always in everyone's hands. It is known that the Jews, before the Babylonian captivity, being so inclined to idolatry, it is not strange that when they abandoned the worship of God to adore idols they neglected the Sacred Books — whether in possessing them or in reading them. But what is maintained against M. Mallet, and what is at issue, is that with respect to those Jews who had zeal for their Religion, it was always freely permitted to them — without distinction of condition, age, or sex — to possess and to read them; and that it was never the intention of Moses, nor of those who succeeded him, to take away knowledge of them from the people, to forbid their reading, or to render it impossible. This is what M. Mallet has to contest — and to this purpose the scarcity of the Sacred Books is of no avail to him, unless he proves that it was the Priests and the Prophets who deliberately intended for these books to be scarce. And this he proves in no manner whatsoever.

Second: he returns to his change of the Hebrew letters in the time of Rehoboam — a pure chimera which he himself had abandoned.

Third: he attributes to Ezra another notion no less chimerical — that of preventing, through this change of characters, the Samaritans from possessing the books of the Law. This is something no one has ever said, and which was in any case impossible — because the Jewish Priests who had been sent to them by the Kings of Assyria, to teach them the legitimate

worship of the God of the land (*legitima Dei terrae* — for this is how the Assyrians referred to the God of Israel), so that this God being appeased they should no longer be devoured by lions, had brought them the books of the Law written in the ancient characters, which those peoples have always preserved since, as has been said above. Accordingly, no one has ever attributed any such design to Ezra with regard to the Samaritans — but only that of having nothing in common with those schismatics and half-pagans, and of thereby preventing the Jews from allowing themselves to be corrupted by their proximity by being drawn into their errors. This has always been the spirit in which the Jews have regarded them since, as appears from the astonishment of the Samaritan woman that Jesus, being a Jew, had asked her for water. *For the Jews*, says St. John, *have no dealings with the Samaritans.* If therefore Ezra had the Samaritans in view in changing the characters, it can only have been in order to break off all commerce with them — in the reading of the Bible as in everything else.

Fourth: but how could a man who does not know what passes before his own eyes be well-informed about things so distant? For what can he mean by supposing that French characters are unknown to the English? Was there ever a more extraordinary fantasy?

M. Mallet then employs his principal argument for demonstrating the scarcity of the books of the Law — which is the astonishment of King Josiah when the book of the Law was shown to him, having been found in the Temple by the high priest Hilkiah. The interpreters are divided on the subject of this book found in the Temple. Some maintain it was the very original written by Moses, as appears, they say, from these words of 2 Chronicles 34:14: *Hilkiah the priest found the book of the Law of the Lord given by the hand of Moses.* This is the view of Grotius. But others, such as Vatable, believe it was only a copy, hidden in the Temple during the persecutions of Manasseh or Amon, and that the words *by the hand of Moses* are merely a Hebraism indicating that Moses was the author of this book, not that it was the very copy he had written with his own hand.

But even so, what use could M. Mallet make of this for the establishment of his paradoxes? He would have to conclude from it either that it was not Moses's intention for the Jewish people to read the books of the Law — for that is what he undertook to prove — or at least that it was Moses's intention for the books of the Law to be so scarce that the people could have no copies to read. Now if this is to be well concluded from this particular fact, one must also conclude from it that it was Moses's intention for the Priests to neglect the reading of the Law and to take no account of observing the ordinance he made to them in Deuteronomy 31 — to assemble all the children of Israel in the sabbatical year, at the feast of Tabernacles, and to read the words of the Law to them, so that they might learn it and fear the Lord their God and observe all His commandments. For he is obliged to say, in order to make his argument hold, that the Priests had not done this during the eighteen years of Josiah's reign — since the King was struck by what he found in this book as by something entirely new. One would have to conclude likewise that it was not Moses's intention for the ordinance he prescribes in Deuteronomy 17 to be observed with respect to the King — that as soon as he was placed on

the throne, he should have Deuteronomy transcribed from the copy that the Priests would give him as being the most correct, and that he should read in it every day of his life, and thereby learn to fear the Lord his God and to observe all that is prescribed by the Law. For since the discovery of this book occurred in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, M. Mallet must say that the Priests had failed to do toward him what the Law of Moses commanded, and that this had caused this Prince — otherwise so pious and so good — to have had until then no knowledge of the Law of God. Will M. Mallet therefore conclude that it was not Moses's intention for him to read it?

Let him learn, then, that nothing would be more ridiculous than to judge the intention of Moses by facts which could only have come about through open violation of what Moses had ordained — and which can only have been the consequence of the horrible overturning of the whole Law of God and of all the worship due to Him under the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. But however this came about — for one can speak of it only by conjecture — since one cannot say with the least plausibility that it was through good zeal, it being clear that it could only have been through a great negligence of the things of God, when it was not through an altogether wicked and impious design: it is the height of absurdity to take this scarcity of the Sacred Books — which can be attributed only to the sins of the Jews — as an argument that Moses had no intention for his books to be read by the people of God for whom he made them, and whom he himself calls in Exodus 19 a holy nation, one that was to be regarded as being, in a sense, all of them Priests and Kings.

Chapter XII Examination of the Tenth Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Books of Holy Scripture to Read, Because There Were So Few Copies That the Church Fathers Believed They Had All Been Burned in the Conflagration of the Archives of the Temple and of the City of Jerusalem

Is it to act in good faith to attribute generally to the Church Fathers an opinion held by only some of them — who, having been misled by the Fourth Book of Ezra, which is an apocryphal book full of falsehoods, believed that all the books of the Law had been burned or lost in the destruction of Jerusalem, and that Ezra had dictated them anew by a divine inspiration?

But what manner of mind must one have to persist obstinately in upholding a fable rejected by all scholars — and to fail to see how greatly this false story would be injurious to Religion, since it would no longer be possible to use several of the most memorable Prophecies to persuade those who doubt the truth of Religion? For to do so it is necessary to be assured that these Prophecies were written before the events they predicted. But according to this false supposition, one could no longer assign to them any date other than the time of Ezra, who would have dictated them all anew. And thus, he having lived only after the very great events foretold by several of these Prophecies — such as, for example, the prophecy of Isaiah, who predicted the deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus and named him by name; that of the same Prophet concerning the ruin of Babylon; and that of Jeremiah, so clear and so precise, concerning the return of the Jews after seventy years of captivity — they would no longer be of any use for proving the truth of Religion to those who have doubts about it.

One sees clearly enough, then, what harm can be done to Religion by reckless writers who rashly advance everything they believe to be advantageous to the bad cause they have undertaken to defend, without foreseeing its pernicious consequences.

But without dwelling on these consequences, the matter is in itself untenable. There are a great number of proofs showing manifestly that it is impossible that all copies of the Sacred Books were burned in the conflagration of the Temple.

First: there were many Jews among the ten Tribes who had remained in the Religion of their fathers, not having consented to the schism of Jeroboam nor been willing to adore his golden calves. Such were the Prophets who dwelt in the Kingdom of the ten Tribes — Elijah, Elisha, and many others — and those whom they raised in piety, called in Scripture the *sons*, that is to say the disciples, of the Prophets. Such also were those seven thousand whom God told Elijah He had reserved for Himself, and who consequently must have preserved the true worship of the Jewish Religion without being either schismatics or idolaters. Now, the ten Tribes having been taken away into the country of the Assyrians and Medes more than a hundred and thirty years before the burning of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar — is it likely that none of those pious Israelites should have taken the Sacred Books with them? And since it is agreed that

some of them rejoined those of the tribe of Judah to return to Judaea under Cyrus, and one may believe that these were the most zealous for their Religion — is this not a means by which the Sacred Books could have been preserved? And the Book of Tobit furnishes proof that the Sacred Books were indeed present among those captives carried away by Shalmaneser: for it is said of Tobit that, having risen from his dinner to bury a Jew who had been killed and was told to be lying dead in the street, he recalled this word of the Prophet Amos: *your feast days shall be turned into mourning and all your songs into lamentation.* Which shows moreover that there were others among the Jews besides the Priests and Levites who read Holy Scripture.

Second: I have already noted that the Samaritans — that is, those peoples whom the Kings of Assyria had placed in Samaria and in the other cities of the ten Tribes — possessed the books of the Law long before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, these having been brought to them by those Jewish Priests whom the King of Assyria had sent to teach them *legitima Dei terrae* — that is, the manner in which the God of the people of Israel was to be worshipped according to the Law of Moses. And these are the copies of the Pentateuch, written in the ancient letters of the Canaanites afterwards called Samaritan, which have remained with those peoples ever since. Now it is perfectly clear that these Samaritan copies could not have been in the Temple, nor consequently been burned there.

Third: eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel and Daniel, together with other God-fearing Israelites, were transported to Babylon with King Jehoiachin. Is it likely that none of those captives brought the Sacred Books with him — above all Ezekiel, who was a Priest and had thereby a particular obligation to read the Law and to teach it to others?

Fourth: the same must be said of Jeremiah, who was also of priestly lineage, and who cannot be thought to have lacked zeal for preserving the books of the Law, and who had every means of doing so. For the city of Jerusalem having been taken in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, on the fourth day of the fourth month, Nebuchadnezzar gave orders that the Prophet Jeremiah be well treated and given every liberty. Yet it was only a month later that the Temple was burned, as is recorded in 2 Kings 25:8. How then can one believe that a Priest as holy as Jeremiah, being so readily able to carry off the Sacred Books, should not have done so?

Fifth: it appears that Daniel possessed the books of Moses during the Babylonian captivity, since he says in chapter 9, speaking to God: *All the people of Israel have transgressed thy Law, and have turned aside, that they might not obey thy voice. And therefore the curse and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against thee.* And a little further on: *All this evil is come upon us, according to what is written in the Law of Moses.*

Sixth: it is said in the sixth chapter of First Ezra that the Temple was finished being built in the sixth year of King Darius, and that the Priests and Levites were established in their

functions, *as it is written in the book of Moses — sicut scriptum est in libro Moysi*. Yet Ezra had not yet come to Jerusalem: for it is only in the following chapter that he recounts how he came to Judaea in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. They therefore already had the books of Moses before the time when he is supposed, according to the fable M. Mallet wishes to maintain, to have dictated them anew.

Seventh: in Nehemiah chapter 8, the people, wishing to be instructed in the Law of Moses, do not ask Ezra to dictate it to them afresh — but only ask him to *bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel*: *Et dixerunt Esdrae scribae ut afferret librum legis Moysi quam praeceperat Deus Israeli.* And it is immediately said that Ezra brought the book of the Law and read it before all the people.

Nothing therefore is more untenable, as I have already said, than this complete loss of all the Sacred Books in the burning of the Temple. But what reveals M. Mallet's blindness still further is that even if this fact were not as false as it is, what we have just said shows plainly that he could not conclude anything from it in favour of the thesis he maintains — that it was not Moses's intention for the Scriptures to be read by the people. For all that it would immediately prove is that the Sacred Books were very scarce at a time when that unhappy people had so thoroughly abandoned the worship of God and the care to observe His Law that it drew upon itself the most horrible scourges of His wrath and vengeance. It would therefore be to this forgetting of God and this non-observance of the Law that one ought to attribute the scarcity of copies of the divine Scriptures. And thus it would be as poor reasoning to take this as proof that Moses had no intention of having his books read by the people of God, as it would be to take the difficulty the ten Tribes had in going to offer their sacrifices at Jerusalem throughout the entire period of the Kings of Israel as proof that it was not Moses's intention for all Jews to offer their sacrifices in one place alone.

Chapter XIII Examination of the Eleventh Proof: That It Could Not Have Been the Custom of the Old Testament to Give the People the Books of Holy Scripture to Read, Because the Gentiles Sought Them Out with Great Diligence, Whereas the Priests, on the Contrary, Did Everything They Could to Prevent Them from Falling into Their Hands.

M. Mallet bases this proof, in his fifteenth chapter, upon a passage from the First Book of Maccabees, chapter 3, verse 48, where it is said that the Jews opened the books of the Law, *in which the Gentiles sought the likeness of their idols*. Upon which he says: that there was a kind of combat between the Jews and the Gentiles — for the Gentiles sought out the books of Scripture everywhere, in order to find support there for their superstitions; and the Jews, on the contrary, hid them as best they could, to prevent the bad use the pagans were making of them.

But what can one imagine weaker, or more beside the point, than this pretended proof? For on the one hand the fact itself is chimerical, and this kind of combat between the Jews and the Gentiles of which M. Mallet speaks is a pure fantasy — since, had the Jews been of the mind he attributes to them, of carefully hiding the Bible from the Gentiles, they would not have translated it into Greek, as they had done more than seventy years before the time of the Maccabees, for the benefit of a pagan King; which gave the Gentiles easy access to the Holy Scriptures, that translation having soon spread throughout the East, as was said in the examination of the sixth proof. And when, on the other hand, the fact were true, it could serve M. Mallet for nothing in establishing what he claims — since the question is not whether the Jews wished or did not wish the Pagans to read Holy Scripture, but whether their Priests and Doctors found it objectionable that it should be read by all manner of persons from among the Jews themselves.

Chapter XIV Examination of the Twelfth Proof: That the Doctors of the Law and the Wisest Among the Hebrews Were So Far from Wishing to Make the Sacred Books Popular That They Did Not Even Permit Their Reading Generally to the Disciples They Were Instructing

This last proof is a worthy crowning of all the others, and one ought to be grateful to M. Mallet for having ended there all the colours he could find for propping up his absurdities — for nothing is better suited to disabusing those whom he might have thrown into error, by the number of his false arguments and the boldness with which he advances them. For what he says in this recapitulation of his proofs, in a somewhat obscure manner, is what he had expanded and stated more clearly in his sixteenth chapter, which bears the title: *On the Ordinance of the Hebrews which Forbade the Reading of* CERTAIN BOOKS *of Holy Scripture Before the Age of Twenty-five or Thirty Years.* And the oldest authority he cites to prove this ordinance is Origen, Homily 1 on the Song of Songs, who speaks of it in these terms:

> *Moris est apud Hebraeos omnes Scripturas a Doctoribus et Sapientibus tradi pueris, simul et eas quas δενθερώσεις appellant; ad ultimum quatuor ista servari, id est, principium Genesis, Ezechielis principia et finem et hunc Cantici Canticorum librum.*

That is: *"It is the custom among the Hebrews that the Doctors and Wise Men give* CHILDREN *all the books of Scripture to read, and even those which contain their traditions, and that there should be reserved for a more advanced age the beginning of Genesis, the beginning and end of Ezekiel, and this book of the Song of Songs."* St. Jerome fixes this more advanced age — before which one did not read these four passages of Scripture — at thirty years, and St. Gregory of Nazianzus at twenty-five.

M. Mallet cites all of this, and has so little judgment as not to have seen that this Ordinance of the Hebrews, far from confirming his error, manifestly destroys it and proves in an irresistible manner that it is more false than falsehood itself that these Jewish Doctors prevented, as best they could, the holy Books from being read by the people. For who does not see that, this prohibition being an exception to what was generally permitted to all Jews — even to children — and this exception concerning only a single small book of Scripture and certain portions of two others, it is an assured sign that everyone indiscriminately, without distinction of rank, age, or sex, could read all the other books without difficulty — and even these, once they had reached the age below which it was not thought fitting that they should read them? And we have a celebrated example of the custom that Origen assures us existed among the Hebrews of having even children read the divine Scriptures, in the person of Timothy, to whom St. Paul represents it as a grace he had received from God that *he had known the holy letters from childhood — qui ab infantia sacras Litteras nosti* (2 Tim. 3:15). And yet he could only have learned them — his father being a Gentile — from Eunice his mother and from Lois his

grandmother, who, being holy women, would have felt a scruple about reading Holy Scripture and having a child read it, had what M. Mallet supposes — that it was not God's intention in giving it to men that it should be read by the ignorant and by women — been anything other than the fantasy it is, condemned by St. Paul in praising what would have been blameworthy according to this Doctor.

But to return to his Ordinance of the Hebrews: one must acknowledge that it is the blindest thing imaginable to have cited it among the proofs which, as he claims, ought to convince *every reasonable man* that it was not the custom of the Old Testament to give the people the books of Holy Scripture to read.

It is true that he made use of two artifices — altogether unworthy of an honest man — to prevent anyone from seeing too readily how greatly this pretended proof told against him.

The first is that, citing in Latin and in French a rather long passage from St. Gregory of Nazianzus, taken from his first Sermon, he suppresses what follows, which manifestly condemns him. For that holy man, having said that only at a certain age (namely twenty-five years, as he then specifies) was the reading of certain books of Holy Scripture permitted, adds: *But as for the others, they were common to everyone, and their reading was permitted from the earliest age,* ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. Is this apt to confirm what M. Mallet claims to prove by this law of the Hebrews — that it was never the thought of the Doctors of the Law and the wisest among the Jews to make the Sacred Books popular? Was it not to make them popular, to let almost all of them be read by everyone from the earliest youth, reserving only a few — which everyone could also read, but only after the age of twenty-five?

The second artifice is far more shameful: for it is a flagrant falsehood. There is in the passage from Origen, as has already been seen, the statement that the Doctors of the Jews were accustomed to give *children* all the Holy Scriptures to read, with the exception of certain passages. He has changed, in translating this passage, the word *children* to *disciples*; and he takes advantage of this falsification throughout all that follows. He says at page 114: *That it is established, by the testimony of the Church Fathers, that there was an ordinance among the Hebrews which forbade the Doctors of the Law from giving to read, even to those who were receiving their instruction, certain books and certain passages of Scripture.* And at page 115 he asks *whether it can enter the mind of a reasonable man that what was forbidden to the Disciples of the Doctors of the Law — who had some capacity of their own and could consult their masters on the difficulties they encountered — should have been permitted to the common people, who had neither a master to instruct them nor the ability to interpret for themselves the difficult and entangled passages.* And finally he repeats the same falsehood in his conclusion, where he gathers his proofs together. *In the end*, he says, *it was so far from the thought of the Doctors of the Law and the wisest among the Hebrews to make the Sacred Books popular that they did not even permit their reading generally to the disciples they were instructing*.

Was there ever a grosser sophism, and one conducted with worse faith? Is it to wish the Sacred Books not to be popular — that is, not to be read by the common people of the Jews — to have wished, according to the testimony of Origen whom M. Mallet himself takes as his witness, that they should all be read to children from their very infancy, with the exception of certain passages that do not amount to the fiftieth part of the whole? Is it even to have wished those passages not to be read by the people, to have only ordained that they should not be read until the age of twenty-five or thirty? This is as if one were to say that the Council of Trent forbade religious vows, because it forbade them to be made before the age of sixteen. Finally: by what right did he change the word *children*, which he found in Origen, to *disciples* — a word he found nowhere, which he substituted for the other in order to deceive the world, insisting upon this word *disciples* of his own invention, and thereby seeking to make it believed that those wisest among the Jews permitted the reading of the Sacred Books not to the common people but only to the disciples they were instructing — and that even with respect to their disciples they did not permit it generally? What falsehoods and what shameful impostures, to seek to find his novel error in a passage that manifestly condemns it!

Chapter XV On Another Law of the Jews Which Overturns All of M. Mallet's Fancies: That Every Israelite Was Obliged to Write Out with His Own Hand, or Have Written for Him, a Copy of the Law

But having shown that the law of the Hebrews spoken of by the Fathers — whereby certain passages of Scripture were not to be read before a certain age — so far from being favourable to him, clearly establishes the contrary of his fancies, there remains only to confound him yet further by another law of those same Jews, which is of itself capable of making manifest the falsity of what he maintains with such audacity: that the books of the Old Testament were not written to be placed in the hands of the people. This is the celebrated Ordinance by which every Jew was commanded to write out a copy of the Law with his own hand, if he knew how to write, or to have one written for him if he did not. It is recorded by all those who have written on the customs of the Jews, and is found in the following terms in the Gemara, in the treatise Sanhedrin, chapter 2:

> *Rabbi Abba has said: Even though a man may have a book of the Law left to him by his parents, he is nonetheless obliged to write one himself, according to what is said: "Now therefore write ye this song for yourselves" — for they hold that this passage obliges one to write out the entire Law, since it is not to be written in separate sections.*

Rabbi Moses son of Maimon — the most reasonable of all Jews who have written since Christ — records this same tradition in the first part of his Abridgement of the Talmud in these words:

> *Every Israelite is obliged by an affirmative precept to write for himself a copy of the Law, as it is said: 'Now therefore write ye this song for yourselves' — which is as much as to say: Write the Law in which this Canticle is found, for the Law is not to be written in separate sections. Even if his fathers have left him a book of the Law, he is obliged to write it himself; and when he has written it with his own hand, this book is as a tradition from Mount Sinai" — that is, it has a particular holiness and worth, and becomes thereby the more authentic — "if he cannot write it himself, he has it written for him. Whoever corrects a copy of the Law, though it be but a single letter, does as much as if he had written it entire. The King wrote two copies: one as a private person, which remained in his treasury, and another as King, which he carried with him to war. These copies were corrected and collated with the one kept at the entrance of the Temple by the order of the Great Sanhedrin.*

This same tradition is found in all the commentators and abridgers of the Talmud. And there is no reason to doubt that the Jews have observed this custom from the most ancient times; but they observe it no longer today, since they have had the Hebrew Bible printed with very great care. It is only the books used in their Synagogues that they still continue to write by hand.

Father Morin, in his *Exercitationes on the Bible*, Book II, Exercise 16, chapter 5, section 6, uses this law to prove that there were no vowel points in St. Jerome's time — for that Father would have spoken of them, and it is in vain that some have tried to say that copies with points were very rare, such that St. Jerome might not have seen them. *Those who speak thus*, he says, *appear to be little versed in the customs of the Jews: for every Jew was obliged to write out with his own hand, or have written for him, a copy of the Law. This is a very ancient tradition among them.* Having proved this by several Rabbis and by the Gemara, he draws the conclusion which M. Mallet is earnestly entreated to hear well:

> *It therefore follows that at least the Pentateuch — that is, the books of Moses — must have been in the hands of all the Jews, and that there were often several copies in each family, since they preserved those left to them by their fathers. Now who does not see that, if the points had been of so early a date, and it had been believed that it was Ezra who had added them to the text, every Israelite who copied out the Pentateuch would not have failed to include them — and would have done so with all the more care the less learned he was, since the Jews set such store by them that they call them the soul of the Law?*

It is readily understood that nothing could more thoroughly demolish M. Mallet's extravagant pretensions regarding the reading of the books of the Old Testament. He is nonetheless so satisfied with himself that he believes he has only to do the same with regard to the New Testament as he imagines he has done with regard to the Old — and gives us to understand that this will be even easier for him.

> *Let us pass,* he says (p. 119), *from the Old Testament to the New, and see whether we shall not find there yet more light to discover the truth we seek*

That is to say — for this is what he takes for a great truth — to show that the intention of Jesus Christ and the Apostles was not that the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament should be read by common Christians; just as he claims to have proved that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were never permitted to be read by the common people of the Jews.

But I think that after all that has been said thus far, one will readily believe that one need only take the contrary of so ill-founded a discourse — and that there is good reason to hope that no fewer falsehoods and failures of common sense will be discovered in the proofs he brings to support his fancies regarding the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament, than have been found in his efforts to establish them regarding those of the Old.

Book II Concerning the Reading of the Books of the New Testament

Chapter I Examination of the First Proof: Drawn from the Silence of Jesus Christ Regarding the Versions of the Sacred Books

It does not suffice M. Mallet to have maintained that the reading of the books of Holy Scripture was forbidden to the common people of the Jews, and that they were to know of them only what their Priests and Doctors chose to tell them. He is not content to have robbed that People — who alone upon earth adored the true God — of the advantage that, according to St. Paul, belonged to all of them: that the Oracles of God had been entrusted to them. *What advantage then hath the Jew?* (says the Apostle, Romans 3:1–2) *or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* He is not pleased to treat the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the Church, any better than those of the earthly Jerusalem — the children of the free woman any better than those of the slave. As he maintained that the intention of Moses was never that the common people of the Jews should read the books of the ancient Law, so he maintains with equal boldness (p. 187) that it was not the intention of the Apostles that the common body of Christians should come to know the truths of Religion through their reading of the Holy Scriptures of the new Law.

But as one has seen that nothing could have been weaker than the arguments he employs to establish the first part of his paradox — that which concerns the usage of the Old Testament — I do not doubt that what he says about the second, which concerns the usage of the Church in the time of the Apostles and the early centuries, will be found still more unreasonable. I shall omit none of his proofs, though in truth they are such that they would not deserve to be dwelt upon.

The first proof is drawn from the silence of Jesus Christ regarding the translations of Holy Scripture, from which he concludes that they were entirely lacking in His time.

One would have to be reckless to the point of excess to advance so visible a falsehood — that at the time of Jesus Christ there existed no translation of Scripture. This is what M. Mallet asserts four times in his chapter 17, and he has quite forgotten what he himself said in chapter 15 about the famous version of the Seventy, made more than three hundred years before the preaching of Jesus Christ — a version so celebrated and so authoritative that the canonical writers of the New Testament very often cited passages of the Old according to that translation.

This first proof therefore rests on nothing but ruinous foundations, everything it supposes being highly uncertain or entirely false.

1°. There is no solid proof that many of the Hebrew Jews — who spoke a language mixed of Hebrew and Syriac — did not know enough ancient Hebrew, even though they had no longer the use of speaking it, to understand the Sacred Books in the original without needing a translation. The proof ordinarily adduced, after Cardinals Bellarmine and du Perron, to show that they did not understand it, is that when Our Lord said before His death *Eli, Eli, lamma Sabachthani — My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* the Jews present believed He was calling upon Elijah. But for this proof to hold good, it would be necessary to be certain of what St. Jerome believed — namely, that Our Lord did not cite this verse of the Psalm according to the Syriac, which He ordinarily spoke. But this appears quite implausible. For although the first two words *Eli, Eli* are Hebrew, it does not follow that they were not equally Syriac of that time, which drew more heavily upon Hebrew than it has done since. And as for the last words *lamma Sabachthani*, they are certainly Syriac and not Hebrew. This is why St. Jerome could only maintain that Our Lord had cited these words of the Psalm according to the Hebrew by claiming that one ought to read in St. Matthew and St. Mark, as it stands in the Hebrew, *lamma azabtani* and not *Sabachthani* — which has no plausibility whatsoever, the word this Father wished to have read being found in neither of these two Evangelists, neither in the Vulgate nor in any Greek manuscript or printed edition; although there are some in which, by manifest copyists' errors, one finds *Ζαφθάνει*, or *ἀβαχθανί*, or *βαχθανή*. Nor can one say, as Cardinal Bellarmine does, that it was to soften the pronunciation that *σαβαχθανί* was put in Greek and *Sabachthani* in Latin rather than *azabtani*. For it is clear, on the one hand, that *azabtani* would have been softer than *Sabachthani* — above all in Greek, where the latter is written with two aspirates. And on the other hand, it would have been a strange enough coincidence that, intending merely to soften the pronunciation of the Hebrew word, one should have fallen upon precisely the Syriac word that means the same thing. Whence then comes it, one will ask, that those present believed He was calling upon Elijah? It is perhaps because they were Roman soldiers, who had heard the Jews speak of the Prophet Elijah — since there were some among them whose intercourse with the Jews had brought them to a knowledge of the true God, as the two Centurions: the one in the Gospel, and the other in the Acts. Or they may have been among those Jews called Hellenists, who knew neither Hebrew nor Syriac but only Greek, and who read the Bible only in the Septuagint version — of whom there were doubtless many in Jerusalem on account of the Passover feast.

2°. The Septuagint could serve nearly all the Jews who had zeal for their Religion as a means of understanding Holy Scripture, since Greek had become, since the Greek conquests, the common language of all the East, and of Syria — which included Palestine — no less than of the other provinces. This is what M. Mallet ought at least to have learned from Estius in the closing part of his Preface on the Epistle to the Hebrews: *"The use of the Greek language"*, says he, *"having spread widely throughout the East, and even into Syria, since the Greek Kings had subjected it to their dominion, not only the Jews dispersed among the Gentiles, but even those who dwelt in Palestine had little by little grown accustomed to speaking that language. And this is the reason why the Apostles preferred to use the Greek language in*

their Epistles, in order to be understood by everyone, rather than a language that would have been understood only by the Syrians and the Hebrews."

3°. What we said in the preceding Book, chapter 8, leaves no room to doubt that there were, before Jesus Christ, versions of Holy Scripture in the Chaldaean or Syriac language that had become vernacular among the Jews. I do not repeat what I said in that place; it may be seen there.

But however this may be, one cannot doubt that at that time the common people of Jerusalem understood the Scriptures. For we have proofs of this in the Gospel and elsewhere that appear convincing, and which will show at the same time that neither Jesus Christ nor the Apostles ever disapproved of their being read by all manner of persons.

The first is that Jesus Christ, in the fifth chapter of St. John, speaking to the Jewish people — and not only to the Doctors of the Law — tells them that they searched the Scriptures diligently: *Scrutamini Scripturas* — or exhorts them to do so, if this verb is to be taken as an imperative. He therefore supposed that the common people of the Jews, to whom He was speaking, either understood enough Hebrew to be able to read the Scriptures in the original, or had some version in which they could read them — and He approved of their doing so.

The second is what is recounted in the fourth chapter of St. Luke: that Jesus, having entered the Synagogue at Nazareth, was presented with the book of the Prophet Isaiah; and having opened it, He read five or six lines, after which He closed the book; and all having their eyes fixed upon Him, He said to them: *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* And all, adds St. Luke, bore witness to Him. They had therefore all understood what the prophecy of Isaiah — which Jesus Christ had read — contained. If it were in Hebrew, they therefore understood enough Hebrew for that purpose, even though they no longer spoke it. And if it were a version, there were therefore versions — contrary to what M. Mallet claims.

The third may be drawn from the parable of the rich man (Luke 16). For when the rich man pressed Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house, to warn his brothers to live in such a manner as not to be condemned after their death to the same torments as himself — Abraham answers him: *They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them* — that is to say, let them obey what they teach. He therefore supposed that the common people of the Jews, such as the brothers of this rich man, could read the books of Moses and the Prophets, whether in the original or in some version, in order to regulate their lives according to the instructions they would find there. And it is so entirely from there that he claims they ought to learn what is to be done to avoid eternal damnation, that he declares to him: if they neglect to apply themselves to this reading, or if they profit nothing from it, it will be a sign that their hardness of heart is such that they would not be converted even though a dead man rose to move them to change their lives. *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*

4°. *In the seventeenth chapter of the Acts, verse 11, it is said that the Jews of Beroea received the word of God that St. Paul preached to them with great affection and ardour, searching the Scriptures daily to see whether what they were told was true — that is, whether the passages of the Old Testament by which St. Paul had proved to them that Jesus Christ was the Messiah were to be found in the Bible as he had cited them. Does this not show plainly that it was the custom of the Jews to read Holy Scripture, even in their vernacular language — since it is certain that these Jews of Macedonia read it in Greek, which was their mother tongue?*

5°. St. Peter, in his second Epistle — written, as the first, to the faithful Jews dispersed in various provinces of Asia — having spoken to them of the voice of the Father that bore witness to Jesus Christ as His beloved Son, adds: *But we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* From which we learn two things. The first: that St. Peter approves of all the faithful to whom he writes reading Holy Scripture, since he tells them they do well to heed the oracles of the Prophets as a lamp shining in a dark place — which supposes they had them written in a language intelligible to them. The second: that although all may read Scripture, they ought not, in the difficulties they encounter there, to trust their own private interpretation — of which we shall have occasion to speak elsewhere.

6°. One may add to all of this what is said in the eighth chapter of the Acts concerning the Eunuch of Queen Candace, who, having come to Jerusalem to worship God, was reading the Prophet Isaiah in his chariot on his return journey. If this was in Hebrew, why would one suppose that most of the Jews dwelling in Judaea could not understand Hebrew as easily as a foreigner and an Ethiopian? And if it was in another language, then there were translations of Scripture — contrary to M. Mallet's false supposition. If he is reduced to saying that it was the Septuagint, he will have to acknowledge that this version had placed it in the power of an infinite number of peoples to read Holy Scripture — since the Ethiopians themselves sought in it the means of learning the mysteries of the true Religion. But whence did St. Philip not think to rebuke this Eunuch for the boldness of reading the Sacred Books? Whence did he not regard it as a profanation of the word of God that it should be read by an ignorant person who was not even of the holy nation to whom God had left it in trust? That is doubtless how M. Mallet would have treated him, had he acted in conformity with his principles. But on the contrary, it appears that St. Philip approved his devotion and his search for truth in the Holy Books, even though he did not yet have sufficient light to discover their mysteries. It served as a step toward bringing him to a more perfect knowledge of God through faith in His Son. For God, who does all things in His Elect — but does so by an admirable order of His wisdom, causing them to seek what He wills to make them find, to ask for what He wills to give them, and thus drawing greater graces through lesser ones — had inspired this Eunuch, whom He

had already drawn from the darkness of paganism, to seek in the reading of a holy Prophet what he still lacked in the knowledge of God; and having led him to a passage he did not understand, had disposed him to receive its meaning from one whom, by a singular favour, He was sending to instruct him. And it was this reading — to which he had been drawn of his own accord by an instinct of piety that God was beginning to form in his heart — which, being joined to the explanation given him by that holy Deacon, became the foundation of his faith and his salvation. This example ought to teach M. Mallet that the ignorant, provided they are humble, are as capable as the learned of reading Holy Scripture with profit — and that it is enough that they be disposed to practise faithfully whatever they find clear for the ordering of their duties, and to respect with a sense of religion whatever they do not understand, until it please God to give them the intelligence of it, either by Himself or by His Ministers.

St. Chrysostom does not fail, in explaining this history in his Commentary on the Acts, to make the same reflection on the advantage one draws from the reading of the Holy Books: *"The Eunuch,"* he says, *"is enlightened by reading Holy Scripture. He was in a great post and in great wealth, and yet, even upon the road, he applied himself to this reading. What then did he not do when he was at rest in his house? But there is cause for admiration at the manner in which God converted him. He had not seen Jesus Christ; no miracles had been worked in his presence. How then did so sudden a change come about in him, and how was he disposed to give faith to what St. Philip told him? It is because his soul was occupied with the things of God, that he was attentive to Scripture, and that he was occupied in reading it: so useful and profitable a thing is it to read the divine Scriptures!"* And he repeats this a little further on: *"It is assuredly a great thing,"* he says, *"to read the Sacred Books."* And he then takes occasion from this to reproach his hearers for the little care they took to read Holy Scripture — far from believing, as M. Mallet does, that it is a profanation of the word of God to allow the common body of Christians to read it. And yet, if one believes him, he speaks only after all the Fathers, and has on this point only sentiments in conformity with the practice of the Apostles and of the whole Church in the early centuries. Such is the greatness of his blindness.

Chapter II Examination of the Second Proof: That Jesus Christ Having Followed the Same Conduct as Moses, Not Having Expressed Himself More Clearly on the Truths of Christianity, and Having Spoken with the Same Reserve That God Had Maintained in the Old Testament, the Same Consequence Must Be Drawn Regarding the Prohibition It Is Fitting to Make Against the People Reading the Books of the New Testament

Even were all that M. Mallet supposes to be true, what we said in the first Book to show the falsity of this consequence with regard to the books of the Old Testament would suffice to show equally the falsity of the one he would wish to draw from it with regard to those of the New.

But what astonishment must overcome anyone who knows even a little of his Religion upon reading, in the book of a Doctor of the Sorbonne, an impiety so visible and so prejudicial to the Christian Religion? When he hears it said with perfect composure: *that the Son of God followed the same conduct as Moses, that He did not express Himself more clearly on the truths of Christianity, and that He spoke with the same reserve that God had maintained in the Old Testament?*

What blindness must a man possess who cannot see that to speak in this manner is to renounce Jesus Christ; to refuse to recognise Him as the Messiah; to take Him for another Moses; to hold that the Covenant of which He was the Mediator is not the New Covenant but merely a continuation of the Old — or else to repeat, like a parrot, the words "Old Testament" and "New Testament" without knowing what either one means? For what constitutes one of the essential differences between these two Testaments is that what was hidden in the Old, and proposed only under shadows and figures which a carnal and gross people such as the Jews were incapable of penetrating, is now revealed to us in the New and proposed openly and without enigma. *For this was hidden in the Old Testament* (says St. Augustine, Book I *On the Merit and Remission of Sins*, chapter 1) *by the most just dispensation of the times, which is now revealed in the New*. And in chapter 2 of the same book: *In the Old Testament, what is hidden beneath the veil of earthly promises is revealed in the preaching of the New*. And in his book *Against the Acts of Pelagius*, chapter 5:

> I*n the Testament or Covenant called the Old, which God made with the Jews on Mount Sinai, one finds that He promises them openly nothing other than earthly felicity. And this is why the land into which that people was led, after passing through so long a desert, was called the Promised Land: and the peace they were to enjoy in it by being faithful to God, the kingdom they were to possess there, the victories they were to win over their enemies, the blessing of a numerous posterity, and the abundance of all manner of temporal goods, and other such things — these are the promises of the Old Testament, which were the figures of the spiritual goods*

belonging to the New. But those who observed the Law of God only in order to obtain these temporal goods are the heirs of the Old; because it is only the things that the old man desires that are promised in the Old Testament: whereas one must be in the spirit of the new man — that is, renewed by grace — to have a share in the goods that were prefigured by those carnal goods which God gave as a reward to the heirs of the Old Testament.

But until when were these shadows and veils to last? Until when was God to propose only obscurely and under enigmas the spiritual goods of His grace and the happiness of the life to come? Until the time of the Messiah — until the coming of Jesus Christ. *When the times were fulfilled* (says the same Father, Letter 140, chapter 2) *and the time had come for the grace hidden in the Old Testament to be revealed in the New, God sent His Son upon Earth*. That time would therefore not yet have come, and we would have to wait, like the Jews, for another Messiah to reveal to us and propose openly what was hidden beneath the veils of the Law — if He in whom we believe had not done so; if He had remained on the same terms as Moses; if He had not explained to us, more clearly than Moses, the truths that were to be revealed by the Messiah; and if He had spoken to us with the same reserve that God had maintained in the Old Testament. One sees well enough how impious all of this is.

But one may draw this advantage from the darkness that covers M. Mallet's mind: that he proposes his errors with so much self-contradiction that he destroys them himself in proposing them. For he calls *truths of Christianity* what he claims Jesus Christ did not explain to us more clearly than Moses — as though the very name "truths of Christianity" did not tell us that it is from Jesus Christ that we have learned them.

One need only read his second chapter to recognise that he there establishes the exact contrary of what he advances here. For there he teaches that it is the New Testament which has lifted the veil of the parables and enigmas of the Old, and that it is the truths which the Gospel has taught us that have made us understand that in the Law of Moses everything was transacted in figures. So nothing is stranger than the overturning of this man's mind. For when he had to prove that God formerly spoke to His people only through enigmas, he could only do so by representing that He hid, beneath the shadow of parables, the great mysteries He was to reveal in the time of Jesus Christ — that in this manner He gave them some intimation of the Sacrament of Baptism, which was to wash away sin; of the Eucharist, which was to be the nourishment of our souls; and of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, the reward of our merits; and that He contented Himself, for this purpose, with proposing three enigmas: making them pass through the Red Sea, nourishing them in the desert with heavenly manna, and giving them hope of entering the Promised Land — the Red Sea being the figure of Baptism, the manna that of the Eucharist, and the entry into the Promised Land that of the Elect into Heaven.

But he forgets all of this when it occurs to him that it would serve his advantage — in taking away from Christians, as well as from Jews, the liberty to read the Sacred Books — for Jesus

Christ to have spoken with as much reserve in the New Testament as God had maintained in the Old. He no longer remembers that it is Jesus Christ who has spoken clearly and without any veil to Christians of the Baptism that washes away our sins, of the Eucharist that nourishes our souls, and of entry into Heaven that shall be the reward of our merits — things of which God had spoken to the Jews only under such obscure parables. Rather than be without an argument, he will overturn the very first elements of the Christian Religion which he himself had previously established. The false glimmer of some present advantage confounds all his ideas; and he will commit himself, without seeing it, into manifest heresies — provided he believes it may serve to lend colour to the one he has set his mind to spreading throughout the world at whatever cost: namely, that the intention of Jesus Christ and the Apostles was not that the common body of Christians should read Holy Scripture.

Chapter III Examination of the Third Proof: Drawn from the Words of Jesus Christ, Luke 10:21 — I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes

Must it always be the same thing? Are we always to be obliged to show M. Mallet that what he takes for proofs of the doctrine he wishes to establish are proofs only of his ignorance and his blindness? That at least is what I cannot dispense myself from doing here.

For, first, the revelation of which Jesus Christ speaks in this passage is of the same nature as that which He indicated in another place, when He told St. Peter that he was blessed because it was not flesh and blood, but the heavenly Father, that had revealed to him what he had declared concerning the divinity of the Son: *Beatus es Simon Barjona, quia caro et sanguis non revelavit tibi, sed Pater meus qui in caelis est.* It is in the same sense that the Saviour gives thanks to His Father for having hidden from the wise and prudent what He has revealed to the simple and the little. This must not be understood of the external revelation that is made by preaching, or by the letter of Scripture. For just as the Gospel, whether preached or written, has always been, and will always be until the end of the world, the savour of life unto some and the savour of death unto others — this revelation has always been common both to the wise according to the world, who do not receive it, and to the humble, who do. Rather, it must be understood of the interior revelation, by which the heavenly Father teaches, through His Spirit, only those whom it pleases Him to teach, and whom He has first disposed to be taught with fruit in this divine school, by imprinting upon them the simplicity and humility which are the first dispositions He requires of His disciples, and which He Himself gives them as the first effect of His grace — according to that beautiful word of St. Fulgentius, Book I *ad Monimum*, chapter 18: *Deus humiles quibus dat gratiam non ante datam humiles invenit, sed dando gratiam humiles facit* — God does not find humble those to whom He gives grace; He makes them humble by giving it. *It is likewise of this latter kind of revelation that Jesus Christ speaks in the sixth chapter of St. John: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him — which He repeats in other terms, saying: No man can come to me, except it were given unto him of my Father. And this is what leads Him to add: Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

It is therefore not strange that the truths of the Gospel should not have been discovered to everyone in this manner — since this does not show that God had not willed them to be proposed indiscriminately to all the world, whether by preaching them to all who wished to hear, or by leaving them the books which contain them to read; but only that God does not cause everyone to receive them through a living faith, by touching their hearts with His grace at the same time as He enlightens their minds.

And what we further see in this passage is that God chose rather the simple and the little to bestow this grace upon them, by giving them the gift of faith, than the prudent and wise of the

world; that He preferred twelve ignorant and simple Fishermen to so many Pharisees and Doctors of the Law who believed themselves so righteous and so enlightened; and that in the first establishment of the Church, as St. Paul attests, He called few who were wise according to the flesh, or powerful, or noble — but chose those who were least wise according to the world to confound the wise; the weak according to the world to confound the mighty; the most base and contemptible according to the world, and those who were nothing, to destroy what was greatest, so that no man might glory before Him.

But although this concerns — as I have already said — neither the preaching nor the reading of the Gospel, it is nonetheless worth considering whether this conduct of God bears any relation to that which M. Mallet would have us follow. He shows a great contempt for the ignorant, for those of lesser mind, and for women, and judges them altogether unworthy of reading the Sacred Books, which he would wish to be read only by the learned, the great minds, and the wise. Yet it was rather upon these former than upon these latter that God poured out the firstfruits of His Spirit, and caused to enter in greater numbers into the knowledge and practice of His Gospel — so greatly are the thoughts of God removed from those of men. For those whom one would have judged, reasoning humanly, to be least capable of profiting from the divine instructions that Jesus Christ came to bring into the world, are those who drew the most fruit from them when the preaching of the Apostles spread them everywhere. Which ought to lead one to think, judging in the manner of God, that they are likewise not the least fitted to edify themselves from these same truths by reading them in the books where God has willed that they be preserved.

Chapter IV Examination of the Fourth Proof: Drawn from Another Passage, Mark 4:11–12 — Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see and not perceive

It is to be believed that M. Mallet did not consider who it is to whom Jesus Christ says, in this passage, that He had no wish to disclose the mysteries of His Kingdom. For there is reason to think that had he reflected upon it, he would have been ashamed to claim that the intention of Our Lord and of the Apostles was that all Christians generally — excepting only the Priests and Doctors — and in particular the most pious among the Laity, the most devout among women, the most holy among virgins, should be treated as the Son of God had seen fit to treat the blinded Jews, hardened by a just judgment of God; which was, in almost all of them, an effect of their reprobation and of the sentence the Saviour had pronounced against them, in predicting that they would die in their sins.

Let him therefore enter a little into himself, and read at least the entire passage of St. Mark, of which he has cited only a part.

Unto you (says Our Lord to His Apostles, and in their persons to all His true Disciples) *it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God* — that is, the mystery of the reconciliation of men with God through His Son; which one could not, without impiety, wish to conceal from any Christian. *But unto them that are without* — whom I regard not as my sheep, as He indicates in John 10:26 — *all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them.*

It was therefore the end and the effect of the obscure manner in which Jesus Christ spoke to those Jews to whom He had no wish to disclose the mystery of the Kingdom of God, that they should not be converted and should not be saved — because God had resolved not to convert them and not to save them, as had been foretold by Isaiah, as two other Evangelists note: St. Matthew 13:14 and St. John 12:40.

Does M. Mallet then have the same design in offering this as an example of the manner in which he would have the common body of Christians treated? Would it be so that they should not be saved? God forbid that he should entertain so detestable a thought. Let him then acknowledge the abuse he makes of this passage of Our Lord, and let him employ it no more to support so wicked an opinion as the one he wishes to establish.

Chapter V Examination of the Fifth Proof: Drawn from the Words of Jesus Christ, John 16:12 — I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth — and from His Choosing Only Three Disciples to Be Witnesses of the Transfiguration

I have until now deferred remarking upon one of the greatest illusions M. Mallet entertains throughout this whole matter: namely, that he regards the conduct which Jesus Christ maintained in the dispensation of truth during His mortal life as having been obliged to continue even after the Resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit — which is the state we are now in. Yet nothing is less well founded than this pretension, as is apparent from the very passage he employs to support it.

He says, for example, that Jesus Christ chose only three of His Disciples when He wished to give tokens of His glorious state at the Transfiguration, and that He expressly forbade them to say anything of it to the others until after His Resurrection. And it is this very fact that condemns him. For this secret was therefore only for the time of His mortal life. It was therefore not for any of the Christians. And indeed, who is there today who believes the Transfiguration of the Saviour ought to be kept secret from anyone? To what purpose, then, does this example serve, if not to reveal the confusion of M. Mallet's mind — which cannot distinguish the manner in which Jesus Christ wished to conduct Himself before His death, and the manner in which He wished the Apostles to conduct themselves in preaching Him throughout the earth?

For one sees plainly enough that, during the time He lived in this world, He did not reveal as clearly as He could have done either His quality as Messiah, or His divine nature, or the redemption of the human race through His death — because it would have been an obstacle to the bloody sacrifice He wished to offer for us; since the demons, as St. Paul says (1 Corinthians 2:8), would never have led the Jews to crucify Him had they known Him to be the Lord of glory, and had they known that His cross was to destroy their empire. But at the same time as He was hiding Himself by humility from the common run of Jews, says Tertullian, He commanded His Apostles to announce to all nations the mysteries He was revealing to them, and to preach upon the housetops what had been told them in the ear.

The same is true of this passage from John 16:12: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* For again, it is only for a time that He does not tell them these things — since He promises them in the same place that they will be instructed by the Holy Spirit, who will teach them all truth. And St. John gives us to understand that this applies in some measure to each of the true faithful, according to the measure of their faith — since he tells them in his first Epistle, chapter 2, that the unction of the Holy Spirit abides in them and teaches them all things.

One must therefore not separate what Jesus Christ did during His mortal life from what He did after His Resurrection — both by Himself and by His Apostles, in whom He spoke just as truly as when He was Himself upon earth; and by whom one may say — since it is He who assures us of it — that He accomplished greater things than by Himself alone. For it is through them that He proposed, far more clearly than He had done during His life, the truths He had come to announce to the world. It is through them that He made His name known throughout the whole universe, which before had been known only in a small corner of the earth. It is through them that He entered into possession of what His Father had promised Him, saying that He would give Him the nations for His inheritance and the whole extent of the earth for His Kingdom.

Finally, it is through them that He made known to the Gentiles — drawing them out of the darkness of idolatry — what He wished them to know of the mysteries of His Kingdom. And thus, as we are that Church of the Gentiles, we ought not to consider what Jesus Christ did or did not say to His Disciples before His death and the coming of the Holy Spirit, in order to judge by this of the liberty He has left to all Christians to read what His Apostles wrote for the instruction of the faithful of all nations. For even if M. Mallet's suppositions were true — that Jesus Christ used great reserve during His life in the revelation of the mysteries of His Kingdom, and that He chose only three witnesses of His Transfiguration — these two things could serve him in no way whatsoever in establishing what he wishes to prove. For all that they could show, even were they pertinently adduced, would be that during the time of His mortal life, Jesus Christ did not wish to instruct all His Disciples equally in all the mysteries He came to reveal: which proves nothing at all against the liberty of all Christians to read the books in which the Apostles, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, have published throughout the world, and for the use of all the faithful, the mysteries of the Religion of Jesus Christ.

Chapter VI Examination of the Sixth Proof: Drawn from Various Passages of St. Paul in Which It Is Said That Some Must Be Nourished Only with Milk and Others with Solid Food. It Is Shown, in Answering This, That St. Paul's Intention Was Never That His Letters Should Be Read Only by the Ministers of the Churches to Whom He Addressed Them

One must be strangely destitute of arguments to be reduced to seeking them in frivolous conjectures, in order to show that St. Paul, addressing his Epistles to entire Churches, intended them to be read only by the Ministers of those Churches and not by the people. This is to give the lie to that Apostle so grossly that nothing is easier than to convince everyone of it.

First: when St. Paul wished to write to the Pastors and Ministers of the Church alone, and not to the Churches themselves — that is, to all the faithful of whom they were composed — he knew well enough how to address his letters only to those Pastors; as he did in his Epistles to Timothy and to Titus. Why then does he indicate the contrary in all the others? Why does he address them to all the faithful — saying in the Epistle to the Romans: *To all who are in Rome, beloved of God and called to be saints;* and in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: *To the Church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is their Lord and ours;* and in the Second to the same Corinthians: *To the Church of God which is at Corinth, and to all the saints throughout all Achaia;* and in the Epistle to the Philippians: *To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons* — thus it was not to the bishops and deacons alone; and to the Colossians: *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae?* There are only three — the Epistle to the Galatians and the two to the Thessalonians — that are addressed simply to those Churches without further specification. But what is found in the others shows plainly enough that he understands by the word *Churches* all the faithful who composed them.

Second: it is clear that what he says in these Epistles is addressed to all the faithful and not to their Pastors alone — as the advice he gives to the Romans not to engage in contentions and disputes over whether some believed they were permitted to eat everything and others, being weak in faith, ate only vegetables; and the reproaches he levels at the Corinthians for some among them taking their brothers to law before pagan judges, and for the disorder they maintained in their agapes, and a hundred other things in these Epistles which all the faithful had an interest in knowing, and which it is plain St. Paul wrote precisely in order that they should know them.

Third: it is to know very poorly the spirit of charity and wisdom with which the first Pastors of these nascent Churches governed the faithful, to imagine that they would have had the presumption and harshness to deprive these new Christians — to whom prudence required

that no just cause of complaint be given — of the reading of the letters of their Apostle which were addressed to them, and which were to be their sweetest consolation amid the trials by which their faith, still tender, was so often put to the test. Among the letters of St. Cyprian and St. Augustine there are admirable ones written to their clergy and their people together. Does anyone suppose that the ecclesiastics of Carthage and Hippo would have been bold enough not to read them to the people, reserving their knowledge to themselves and telling the people only what it pleased them to say? And can one imagine that those peoples would have suffered it? It would be folly to entertain such a thought. One would not act in this manner even today, when the simple faithful have far less part than formerly in the affairs of the Church; and when Bishops address Pastoral Letters to the faithful of their Dioceses, not only are they read to them at the Sunday sermon of their parishes, but they are made so public that any private person may have a copy. There is therefore no one in the world but M. Mallet who could have conceived that things were conducted differently with the Epistles of the Apostles.

Fourth: but how could one conceive this, after St. Paul himself has assured us of the manner in which this was done? For can anything be clearer than these words at the end of the Epistle to the Colossians: *When this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the Church of Laodicea, and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea?*

Fifth: it was so far from the Pastors of the Churches to whom St. Paul wrote who disposed of these letters — giving the faithful whatever portion of them they might please — that it is to the faithful themselves that St. Paul gives the charge of reminding their Pastors of their duty; as is seen in the words at the end of the same Epistle to the Colossians: *Say to Archippus: Take heed to the ministry thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

Sixth and last: what I have reserved for the final proof is that St. Paul left nothing to be guessed at regarding his intention. He indicated so clearly that he wished his letters to be read by all the Christians of the Churches to which he addressed them, that if it is not a heresy for M. Mallet to maintain the contrary, then it will be no heresy to contradict Holy Scripture formally. For can one conceive two propositions more contradictory than M. Mallet's — page 174: *The Apostle's design was not that his letters should be understood by the people, except through the ministry of the Priests and Doctors* — and St. Paul's own words at the end of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians: *Adjuro vos per Dominum ut legatur Epistola haec omnibus sanctis Fratribus — I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the holy Brethren?* He uses even a kind of oath, says Theodoret, in order to ensure that all should receive the benefit that would come from this holy reading — fearing that those who first received the letter might not communicate it to the others.

After this, can one suffer M. Mallet to reason as follows against so clear a truth? *St. Paul*, he says, *does not wish the same instructions to be given to all Christians; those who are as children needing only milk, and those who are perfect needing solid food.* M. Mallet would not conclude from this that the Sacred Books ought to be left to be read only by the perfect — or rather, according to his thesis, only by the Ministers of the Church, perfect and imperfect

alike (for there are both) — if he knew better than he does what is admirable and singular in Holy Scripture. And it is plain that he is ignorant of what the holy Fathers have remarked: that one of the things which most marks its divinity, and which makes it surpass all the writings of men, is that it is equally suited to the learned and the ignorant, the great and the small, the weak and the perfect, the simple minds and the most penetrating.

This is what St. Augustine teaches in several places. He does so in few words, but full of light and unction, in the book *On the Utility of Belief*, chapter 6:

> *Believe me, all that is in these books is great and divine. There is nothing there that is not true, and one finds a doctrine extremely fitted to instruct and nourish the soul; but which is so accommodated to the capacity of each person that there is no one who cannot draw sufficient instruction from it, if one has recourse to it with the faith and the piety that the true Religion demands.*

He teaches the same thing, but at greater length, in his second letter to Volusian, whom he was exhorting to read Holy Scripture, although he was not yet a Christian:

> *Its manner of expression is so admirable that, at the same time as it is accessible to everyone, there is scarcely anyone who can penetrate it fully. In the clear things it contains, it is like a familiar friend who speaks without artifice or affectation to the heart of the learned and the ignorant alike. And when it conceals certain truths beneath mysterious expressions, it does not do so in a proud language capable of repelling slow minds and taking from them the courage to approach it, as the poor fear to approach the rich. On the contrary, it invites everyone, by a simple discourse, to come there and seek nourishment from the manifest truths, and to exercise themselves in discovering those that are hidden — having, however, in both the one and the other, nothing but the same foundation of wisdom and light. But lest one should feel disgust, if everything were found there without effort, one encounters things that are difficult to penetrate — so that this may excite the desire to discover them; and having discovered them, one may renew one's knowledge of them and taste them with greater pleasure. It is by this that disordered minds are corrected, that simple minds are nourished, that the greatest minds maintain themselves in ineffable delights.*

Would this saint have spoken otherwise had he foreseen the errors of M. Mallet, and had he undertaken to disabuse him of the false ideas that make him believe it is a profanation of Scripture to let it be read by the ignorant, those of lesser mind, and dissolute persons — whereas it is precisely these persons whom St. Augustine wishes to read it: the dissolute, to withdraw from their disorders; the simple-minded, to maintain themselves in piety and to inflame themselves more in the love of God through the spiritual delights they find there?

But what appears still more wonderful is that this Father overturns in another place, as if by a spirit of prophecy, the fancy of M. Mallet — which leads him to say that one ought not to allow the reading of Scripture to those who, being as children, must be nourished with milk and not with solid food. For it is precisely to these kinds of persons that St. Augustine teaches us God wished Holy Scripture to be proportioned. This appears in his exposition of Psalm 8, on this verse: *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.*

> *By these children still at the breast, he says, I can understand none other than those of whom St. Paul says: As you are still as children in Jesus Christ, I have nourished you with milk and not with solid food. He then marks the goodness God has had in proportioning His Scriptures to the capacity of these children, and that it is in this that the Holy Books have an admirable advantage over the books of the Philosophers — which could be of no use to simple persons — whereas God has so lowered Himself in His divine Scriptures that even children can find there the nourishment proper to them. We may understand Holy Scripture, he says, by the heavens which the Prophet says are the work of the fingers of God; for the Holy Spirit is the finger of God: and it is by this Spirit that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament have been given to us. Now God has lowered the Scriptures to the capacity of children still at the breast — according to what is said in another Psalm, that God lowered the heavens and descended: and He did this on account of His enemies, who, being enemies of the cross, their proud eloquence, unable to endure its humility, even when they say true things, says them in a manner that cannot serve children still at the breast.*

It is therefore this advantage of Scripture — of being suited to the small as well as the great, and to those who need milk as well as to those who need solid food — that M. Mallet has never understood. For it is not strange that one should be inclined to take Scripture from the hands of almost everyone, when one does not know what it is suited for, and when, by an error condemned by all the Fathers, one takes it for a book dangerous to the simple and fit only for the learned — as a book of Scholastic Theology might be.

St. Jerome was far from believing that its reading ought to be forbidden to those who, being still in spiritual childhood, need to be nourished with milk. For in his Preface on the books of Kings, speaking of the books of the Old Testament which appear less proportioned to beginners than those of the New, he says that there are twenty-two of them according to the ancient Hebrew Canon, as there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet — because these twenty-two volumes are, as it were, the letters and first elements for instructing in the knowledge of God the still tender infancy of the just man, which has need of milk: *Quomodo viginti duo elementa sunt per quae scribimus hebraice omne quod loquimur, ita viginti duo volumina supputantur, quibus quasi litteris et exordiis in Dei doctrina tenera adhuc et lactens viri justi eruditur infantia.*

And this accords with what St. Ambrose says, in the book *On the Blessing of the Patriarchs*, that the two Testaments are the two breasts of the Church, because it is by them that she

nourishes us with a spiritual milk. And what St. Fulgentius says: that there is in Scripture abundantly both what may nourish the strong and what may suckle the little: *In Scripturis divinis abundat, et quod robustus comedat, et quod parvulus sugat.*

But nothing is more beautiful on this subject than what St. Gregory says in his letter to St. Leander, Archbishop of Seville, in sending him his *Moralia* on the book of Job:

> *As the word of God contains mysteries capable of exercising the most enlightened minds, it also contains clear truths suited to nourish the simple and the less learned. It carries on its exterior what may suckle children; and it keeps in its most secret folds what may fill the most sublime minds with admiration — like a river whose waters are so shallow in certain places that a lamb could cross it, and so deep in others that an elephant could swim.*

He presents this same advantage of Scripture in the Preface to the twentieth book of his *Moralia*, in a most luminous manner, and one that ought to cause the scales to fall from M. Mallet's eyes:

> *Scripture is incomparably above all other doctrine — not only in that it announces nothing but truths, calls us to an entirely heavenly homeland, and changes the heart of those who read it by detaching them from earthly desires to bear them toward heavenly ones; but also in that, at the very same time as, by its obscurity, it exercises the intelligent and the perfect, it caresses and consoles, by its sweetness, the imperfect and the weak; that it is neither so obscure that one ought to avoid reading it, nor so easy to understand that one ought to despise it; that the more familiar one makes it, the less one tires of it, and the more one meditates upon it the more one cherishes it; that it aids our soul by the simplicity of its words and by the sublimity of the meanings enclosed within them; that it seems to grow and rise in proportion as those who read it grow and rise in understanding — so that the most ignorant and least spiritual find something there, and the learned always find it new.*

Shall we be so imprudent as to close our eyes to the light of these great Saints, in order to follow the false glimmers of this new Writer — who would have it that it is not for the little ones, who still need milk, to read the Holy Scriptures — while these Doctors of the whole Church assure us that to entertain such thoughts is not to know the goodness and wisdom of God in the dispensation of His treasures of grace; that it is to judge Scripture as one judges the writings of the Sages of the world, which could serve only elevated minds and were useless to the simple; whereas it is to have written in God to have done so in so marvellous a manner that the same Holy Scripture can be the milk of the little ones and the solid food of the perfect; can console some by its sweetness, and exercise others by its mysterious obscurity; can give the least spiritual enough to profit from it, and give the learned always something new; and can have, with regard to all, this efficacy and virtue of changing the heart of those who read it, by detaching them from earthly desires to bear them toward heavenly ones.

Chapter VII Examination of the Seventh Proof: That It Was Not the Intention of God That the Sacred Writers of the New Testament Should Compose Their Books to Be Read by the People — Since They Did Not Write Them in the Vernacular, and Since the Church Went Several Centuries Without Any Translation of Them Other Than in Greek and Latin, Which Are the Languages of the Learned

This proof contains three heads. The first: that Greek and Latin, at the time of the Apostles and the primitive Church, were the languages of the learned. The second, which depends upon the first: that the books of the New Testament — which, excepting the Gospel of St. Matthew, were all written in Greek — were not written in the vernacular. The third: that the Church went several centuries without any translation of them, other than in Greek and Latin. I shall treat only the first and second of these three heads to begin with — or rather only the first; because it will necessarily follow that all the books of the New Testament, excepting the Gospel of St. Matthew, were written in the vernacular, if it is established that at the time of the Apostles Greek was not a language of the learned but the most widely spoken of all languages. And nothing is easier to show than this.

For when one opposes vernacular languages to the languages of the learned, one applies this latter name only to languages that are no longer in common use among any people, but that are learned only through study — which is why they are also called dead languages, because it is in the books of the dead that one goes to find them. Thus Hebrew is today only a language of the learned, because it has long ceased to be the vernacular of any people. One may say nearly the same of Greek, because the common Greek of today is sufficiently different from the ancient Greek — which they call literary, or by abuse, Greek-Latin — to be regarded as a new language. But there are some places, though few and unimportant, where ancient Greek is still spoken. Brerewood assures us of this (In Scrutinio Linguarum) with regard to fourteen towns of the Morea, whose inhabitants are called Laconians — the Laconians of old. He says they speak ancient Greek, though without observing the rules of Grammar; which does not prevent them from understanding well those who speak it correctly, whereas they do not understand those who speak the common Greek. It is also said that near Heraclea, in Anatolia, there are places where the use of the ancient Greek language has been preserved. As for Latin, it is beyond doubt that today it is only a language of the learned. But to claim that this was equally the case in the time of the Apostles, and throughout the first six or seven centuries of the Church, and that Greek and Latin were not then vernacular languages — this is a thought so foolish that I am ashamed to refute it.

I wish to employ for it only a single passage from St. Augustine, in his Confessions , Book I, chapter 14:

> *Why had I so great an aversion to the Greek language, even though it is full of tales such as those that gave me so much pleasure in reading Virgil? For Homer excels in*

these fabulous inventions and charms the mind with these agreeable fictions. And yet I found nothing there but disgust when I was still a child. I believe that the children born in Greece, who are made to learn Virgil with no less difficulty and pain than I felt in learning Homer, find no more pleasure in the magnificence of those Latin verses than I found in the beauty of those Greek verses. The difficulty I encountered in the study of this foreign language mingled a kind of bitterness into the sweetness of those fables, otherwise so ingenious and so charming. For, as that language was entirely unknown to me, they employed the rigour of threats and punishments to force me to learn it. It is not that the Latin language had not also been unknown to me when I was at the breast; but remarking of myself what each word signified, I learned it not only without anyone employing any roughness or severity to oblige me, but even amid the caresses of my nurses, amid the diversions given to me by those who took pleasure in making me laugh, and amid the games and pastimes with which they amused me.

One cannot doubt, after what St. Augustine testifies in this passage, that in his time — that is, more than 350 years after the establishment of the Church — both Greek and Latin were equally vernacular languages. This is clear enough from what he says: that children in countries where Greek was spoken found as much pleasure in reading Homer as children in countries where Latin was spoken found in reading Virgil, because for both alike what made one or the other of these two Poets so agreeable was that they had learned — amid the caresses of their nurses, without any tiresome constraint, and by the sole desire of making themselves understood — the language in which each had written such ingenious fables. If this is not what one calls vernacular languages, then there have never been any in the world.

M. Mallet nonetheless undertakes to prove in another place, on the authority of M. Lizet, First President of the Parlement of Paris, that in the time of the Apostles there were two kinds of Latin and Greek — one proper to the learned, in which one observed exactly the inflections of verbs, the tropes, the figures, and the other rules of Grammar; and another, vulgar and in the common use of the people, which observed none of this artifice. And the sole proof M. Lizet adduces is that in those days the profession of Grammarian, both among the Greeks and among the Latins, was a distinct profession, and that even girls were given such masters to teach them to speak according to the rules of that art. From which he concludes that there were two different languages: one, which he calls the artificial, of which the ignorant and unlettered people knew nothing; and the other, common and artless, which was that of the people.

But all of this discourse, with due respect to M. Lizet, has nothing solid in it; and what gives it some colour is nothing but two very easily unravelled equivocations.

The first is taking a language more or less pure, more or less correct, for two different languages — which has no foundation whatsoever. A language must be far more altered and corrupted than it ordinarily is through the negligence of those who speak it badly before one

can say it is no longer the same language. This change has been great enough in Italian to lead one to regard Italian as a new language different from Latin. But no one says that the people of Venice or Bergamo speak a different language from those of Florence or Siena, though the speech of the latter is altogether more polished and correct than that of the first two.

The second and principal equivocation is that the words of M. Lizet — Sermonem illum artificiosum indocto vulgo neutiquam communem, sed viris litteratis peculiarem fuisse credere debemus — are highly ambiguous and can have two very different senses. The first: that only those who had learned Latin by art spoke this correct Latin, and that the ignorant did not speak it with such exactness. The other: that only the learned understood it, and that the ignorant understood it no more than Italians today understand Latin when they have never studied it.

The first of these senses is not universally true. For just as we see today that there are women who, without having learned any rule of Grammar, speak and write French perfectly well, there is no reason to doubt that the same thing often happened at Rome; and it is even said that it was Cornelia, the Mother of the Gracchi, who had taught them to speak so well. A child of five was seen in Paris some ten years ago who spoke Latin very easily and very correctly, having learned it only through use, without any rule. But this is not what is at issue. The question is not whether the Apostles' Letters were written more correctly than most of the faithful to whom they were addressed spoke; but whether those faithful, although they spoke less well, understood them clearly. Nor is the question whether the rules of Grammar were better observed in the Latin translation of the New Testament than several of those who read it in the early centuries of the Church observed them; but whether they understood it just as well in reading it as the Picards and Walloons understand the translation of the Bishop of Vence, or of Father Amelotte, or that of Mons. That is precisely what is at issue — or rather nothing is at issue, since this alone is in question. For who has ever doubted that those who speak a living language most politely and correctly are very well understood by those who speak it badly? There is much likelihood that in the time of Terence the Latin spoken by the Roman people was still very rough and imprecise. Did this prevent them from applauding the Comedies of that polished Author, and would they have esteemed them so greatly had they not understood them? Was the language Cicero used in giving his opinion in the Senate different from that which he employed in haranguing the people? And in his need to make himself understood by the Roman people, in order to win their approval for what he proposed, was he obliged to change this so-called artificial language for that popular language full of barbarisms which one would make pass for the only vulgar Latin?

But to return to the Canonical Writers and the Doctors of the Church: did St. Paul speak a different language when he preached from when he wrote? Yet the people understood him preaching; why then would they not have understood him with even greater ease in reading or hearing read his writings? Was it this common Greek, or the Greek of the learned, that St. Chrysostom spoke in his Sermons? If it was the common Greek, then there was none that was

not common, since one could not desire any more elegant than his. And if it was the Greek of the learned, this Greek — whatever name one gives it — was certainly understood by the people without distinction of rank, age, or sex; since, among so many reproaches made against him, no one ever thought to level this one: that, from wishing to speak too well, the people understood nothing of what he said.

Finally, this notion of two different languages within the same language is so ill-conceived that of the two things one claims, one cannot establish the one without destroying the other. For to what end does one employ this distinction of two registers in Latin — one of the people, the other of the learned — if not to show that in translating the Bible into Latin in former times, one did not thereby make it popular, because it was not translated into the language of the people? If that is so, why does one complain of the present translations as having placed the New Testament in everyone's hands? And why does one not apply to them what is said of this Latin version — that it was not contrary to the intention which the Apostles had, it is claimed, of allowing the Sacred Scriptures to be read only by the Pastors and Ministers of the Church? For these translations are at least as elegant with regard to French, and as conformable to the rules of Grammar, as the ancient Latin version was with regard to Latin. One must therefore choose between two things: either that this ancient version placed the Bible within reach of everyone to read (which one would very much prefer not to acknowledge, through an inconceivable obstinacy); or that the versions made recently have not so placed the New Testament — and thus one has no grounds to complain of them.

This would suffice to confound those who devised this false subtlety of two languages within the same language. But in truth it is a pure dream; and one would sooner doubt that it is day at high noon than be able to sustain what M. Mallet advances in two places of his book, at pages 158 and 188: that in the time of the Apostles and the first centuries of the Church, Greek and Latin were only the languages of the learned, and not vernacular languages understood in common by all the people — without excepting women and children — in the countries where each was spoken. And so, taking as certain what he has ridiculously sought to contest, one need only reverse his own argument against himself. For here is how he reasons, at page 157:

> *If it had been God's design to give Holy Scripture to the Church so that it might be read by everyone, the Sacred Writers ought to have written it in the vernacular — or at least the first Christians ought to have made translations of it, to make it intelligible to those who could not understand the original.*
>
> *Yet none of this was done , he says. For not all of the New Testament was written in the vernacular, and it is a matter of public knowledge that the Church went several centuries without any translation of it, other than in Greek and Latin, which are the languages of the learned.*
>
> *It was therefore not the intention of God, or of those who composed these Sacred Books, to make them common and place them in everyone's hands.*

This argument can conclude nothing whatsoever, since what it supposes as notorious in the minor premise is falsehood itself. But here is another argument which will doubtless be judged to conclude better. If it had been the intention of God and of the Canonical Writers of the New Testament that their books should not be read by the people, they ought to have written them in a dead language — as ancient Hebrew was — with a prohibition against making any translation of them, and an ordinance that the Priests alone and the Doctors should have copies.

Yet the exact contrary was done. The Sacred Writers wrote them almost all in the most widely spoken language there has ever been — that is, the most widespread, and the one most peoples either spoke or understood easily. And since the same language cannot be vernacular everywhere, care was taken, from the very beginning of the Church, to make translations of them into several languages — and in particular into Latin, which at that time was the most widely spoken language after Greek and was understood by the greatest number of peoples. And never, in those centuries, was any ordinance heard of forbidding these books to be placed in everyone's hands; on the contrary, everyone was exhorted to read them — even children and young girls.

It is therefore a pure chimera — or rather an impiety — to claim that God had the intention M. Mallet attributes to Him: of forbidding the people the reading of the books of the New Testament. For one could then truly say that the Church, in its greatest fervour, had very poorly seconded the designs of God — since it is plain that she always took every means in her power to make their reading more common and more accessible to all manner of persons.

Chapter VIII Examination of the Last Part of the Seventh Proof: That It Is a Matter of Public Knowledge That the Church Went Several Centuries Without Any Translation of Scripture Other Than in Greek and Latin

One need not be surprised if a man who has read on this matter only Cardinals du Perron and Bellarmine should imagine that everything those Authors assert is a matter of public knowledge. Bellarmine (*De Verbo Dei*, Book II, chapter 16) says that in the time of the Church Fathers the Bible was read only in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and that no ancient Author has spoken of any other translation: *Nec ullus antiquus Auctor meminit alicujus alterius translationis.* Cardinal du Perron, in his *Reply*, maintains the same thing: for the title of chapter 2 of his sixth book is: *On the Two Sole Versions, Greek and Latin, Received in the Church by the Fathers.* And he asserts that one will find nowhere in all antiquity any nation of the Roman Empire in which there existed any edition of Scripture other than in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. This was enough for M. Mallet to say boldly that it is a matter of public knowledge that the Church went several centuries without any translation of Scripture other than in Greek and Latin.

But he ought to have considered, with regard to Cardinal du Perron, that although his *Reply* is a very fine work full of great erudition, he having died before completing it, many things may have remained in it which he would have corrected had he been able to give it its final polish — as he would undoubtedly have done had he himself seen it through the press, his custom being to revise his works more exactly from the printed sheets he had specially drawn for this purpose, which was why he kept a printing press at his country house in the village of Bagnolet, a league from Paris. And this may have more bearing on the sixth Book, which comes at the very end, and which he may perhaps have only drafted, as appears from the fact that it contains several false citations.

Be this as it may, since this is not a matter of any dogma but of a pure fact — and since in matters of fact that depend upon the inspection of documents, the authority of whoever it may be cannot prevent one from examining what is true — I feel myself obliged to say that it is astonishing that two such learned Cardinals should have been able to take for a manifest truth something so remote from the truth.

For how could they say that no ancient Author has spoken of any translation of the Bible other than Greek and Latin — having been able to read in St. Basil, in his second Homily on the Hexaemeron, what he says on these words from the beginning of Genesis: *And the Spirit of God moved upon the waters?*

> *I shall tell you*, says this Saint, *"what I learned from a Syrian, who was little versed in worldly wisdom but deeply so in the knowledge of truth."* (There is almost no room to doubt that he meant St. Ephrem the Deacon of Edessa.) *He told me that the Syrian language was more expressive, and that, approaching closely to Hebrew, it rendered*

the sense of Scripture better. And with regard to this passage: whereas the Septuagint reads that the Spirit of God was borne upon the waters, the version of the Syrians rendered it that the Spirit of God brooded over the waters, as a hen does, communicating to them by brooding upon them a virtue that gives them life.

Is this not to acknowledge another version of Scripture than the Greek and Latin?

Having been able to read in St. Chrysostom, in his first Homily on St. John: that the Syrians, the Egyptians, the Indians, the Persians, and the Ethiopians had translated into their languages the divine doctrines which an unlettered man such as St. John had taught us in his Gospel.

Having been able to read in St. Jerome, in his Preface to Pope Damasus on the Gospels: that the Holy Scripture of the New Testament having been translated into the languages of several nations, nothing could have been added to it without being detected: *Nec in Novo Testamento profuit emendasse, cum multarum gentium linguis Scriptura ante translata doceat falsa esse quae addita sunt*.

Having been able to read in St. Augustine, in his book 32 *Against Faustus*, chapter 16: that it was impossible for the Scriptures of the New Testament to have been corrupted by half-Jews and half-Christians, as the Manichaeans claimed, because whoever had dared to do so would have been immediately confuted by the authority of a great number of more ancient copies — which would have been all the easier since these same books are found written in several different languages. And in the second book of *On Christian Doctrine*, chapter 5: that the pride of men having been punished by the diversity of tongues, it came about that Holy Scripture, which had been given as a remedy for the diseases of our souls — having been written in only one language — was spread throughout the whole earth by means of interpreters who translated it into various languages, so that the nations might have knowledge of it for their salvation.

Having been able to read in Theodoret, Book V of *On the Healing of the Greek Maladies*: that all the earth was full of the prophetic and apostolic doctrine; and that the Hebrew books had not been translated into one language alone, but into the language of the Romans, the Egyptians, the Indians, the Armenians, the Scythians, the Sarmatians, and in a word into all the languages then in use among all the nations.

Having been able to read in Socrates, Book IV, chapter 27, and in Sozomen, Book VI, chapter 37: that Ulfilas, Bishop of the Goths, who lived around the middle of the fourth century, had translated Holy Scripture into their language. And what confirms this is what is read in the life of St. Marcianus, great Steward of Constantinople around 460, related by Bollandus for January 10. For it is remarked near the end that the generals Aspar and Ardaburius, Goths and Arians, having made various gifts to the Church of St. Anastasia built by the Saint, he ordered in acknowledgement of their liberality that on solemn days the Scriptures should be

read in the Gothic language — which proves not only that there existed a version of Scripture in that language, but that, although it was one the Arians used, there was no difficulty in reading it publicly in divine worship, by the order of a Saint, in a church as Catholic as that of Constantinople was at that time — which ought not to be surprising, given the esteem in which the ancient Church held Bibles translated by three heretics, and worse than heretics: Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.

I do not allege what Cardinal Hosius and many others believed — that St. Jerome had translated the entire Bible into the language of his own country, which was Dalmatia — for it is clear that this opinion can have had no other foundation than those words of his letter to Sophronius: *quorum translationem, diligentissimè emendatam olim meae linguae hominibus dederim*, by which some have imagined he meant the language of the Dalmatians, because he was from Dalmatia; whereas there is no reason to doubt that he meant the common language of the Western Church, which was Latin, as appears from his Preface on Joshua — where, speaking of his translation from Hebrew into Latin, he says he offers it to the men of his own language: *Sciat me non in reprehensionem veterum nova cudere... sed pro virili portione offerre linguae meae hominibus.*

I do not allege either what others say — that St. Augustine, at the very end of his Commentary on Psalm 118, makes mention of a translation of the Psalms into the Punic language — for they are also mistaken. All that Father says in that place is that Psalm 118 is so alphabetical that all the verses of each octave begin with the same letter; which he remarks was not observed by those who composed, whether in Latin or in Punic, those Psalms or Canticles called alphabetical (*abecedarii*): *Omnes octonos versus in hebraicis codicibus ab ea quae illis proponitur littera incipere... Quod multo diligentius factum est, quam nostri vel latine vel punice quos abecedarios vocant Psalmos facere consueverunt.* It would seem that some imagined these alphabetical Psalms, whether Latin or Punic, must have been translations of the Hebrew alphabetical Psalms — whereas that Father only wished to speak of Psalms or Canticles composed in his time, whether in Punic or in Latin, similar to the one he himself composed against the Donatists, which stands at the beginning of his works against those schismatics.

Setting aside therefore these proofs, which would not be well founded — who does not know that the tradition of all the Eastern Churches is that the Syriac version, also called Chaldaean, of both the Old and the New Testament is very ancient; that the version of the Old was made before Jesus Christ, as we have already said in the first Book, chapter 8; and that the version of the New was made shortly after the Apostles, as the scholars of our time acknowledge; that it was in this language that the Scriptures were read and the Liturgy celebrated in several provinces of the East, from Syria as far as Persia; that St. James of Nisibis, who attended the Council of Nicaea, had written and expounded Scripture only according to as it was read in that language, as had also St. Ephrem — as St. Jerome attests of the latter in his book *On*

Ecclesiastical Writers, where he adds that his works had appeared so fine that several had been translated into Greek?

Finally, it is an established fact that all the Christians of the Levant translated the Holy Scriptures at once into the vernacular; and that when these first languages, which were vernacular, ceased to be so, they retained the ancient version for the Liturgy — but they added a new one that could render it intelligible to the people. For example: the Syrians made translations of Holy Scripture into their language from the very beginning of the Church, making only some changes to the Chaldaean version of the Old Testament made by the Jews, as we said in the first Book, and translating the New. But when the Syriac — of which those versions still exist — ceased to be vernacular and Arabic became so, they preserved the Syriac translation of Holy Scripture and celebrated the Liturgy in that ancient tongue; but they added to the lessons of the Epistles and Gospels the Arabic translation, so that the people could understand them. They also made translations of all Holy Scripture into Arabic from the Syriac, and some interlinear ones, which are found in the libraries.

The Copts did the same. For scholars of that language believe that the Coptic version of the Old Testament — which follows the Greek of the Septuagint — and that of the New were made at the very time when the peoples of the Thebaid, who alone had use of that language, received the Christian Religion. And one must not be surprised that a language which had once been the vernacular of all Egypt was by then particular to the Thebaid — for the Kings of Egypt, successors of Alexander, being Greeks and having established their Court at Alexandria, the Greek language became far more widely spoken in all the surrounding countries than the ancient Egyptian; but the contrary came about in the Thebaid, which was very distant from it, that ancient language having been preserved there and few persons there understanding Greek. We have very strong evidence of this in the life of St. Anthony and of the other Fathers of the deserts of the Thebaid. For St. Athanasius remarks that some Greek Philosophers having come to confer with St. Anthony, he could neither understand them nor speak to them except through an interpreter. This is further confirmed by what Palladius says in the history of a holy Paphnucius, who spent his life with a cripple — for he says that this St. Paphnucius and this cripple, having gone to visit St. Anthony, it was a solitary named Cronius who knew both Greek and Egyptian who served as their interpreter, because St. Anthony did not know Greek. It was therefore necessary that Scripture should have been translated into the Egyptian language — since St. Athanasius says that St. Anthony, being very young, when he was taken to Church was most attentive to the reading of Scripture and preserved in his heart the fruit to be drawn from it. He therefore understood what was read in Church, although he did not know Greek.

St. Athanasius adds that after the death of his father and mother, going as was his custom with great devotion to Church and thinking to himself during the journey in what manner the Apostles, abandoning all things, had followed Jesus Christ, and how many others, as is seen in the Acts, sold their goods and placed the price at the feet of the Apostles — he entered the

Church at the very moment when the Gospel was being read, in which Our Lord says to that young rich man: *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven* — and that it was this that moved him to abandon all things for Jesus Christ; because he regarded the thought he had had of the example of the first Christians as having been sent to him by God, and what he had heard from the Gospel as though those words had been read for him alone. It was therefore not in Greek but in Egyptian that the Gospel had been read in Church — since he understood not Greek, but only Egyptian.

St. Augustine says, in the Prologue to the books of *On Christian Doctrine*, that it was said of St. Anthony that, not knowing how to read, he had learned Holy Scripture by heart by hearing it read: *vir sanctus Antonius, sine ulla scientia litterarum, Scripturas divinas, et memoriter audiendo tenuisse, et prudenter cogitando intellexisse praedicatur*. Perhaps those who had reported this to St. Augustine had only meant by the words *sine ulla scientia litterarum* that he had not studied, and not that he could not read. But in whatever sense one takes it — how could he have learned the Scriptures by heart, whether by reading them or by having them read to him, as Servulus did of whom St. Gregory speaks, if they had not been translated into a language he understood, which could only have been Egyptian — since it is certain he did not understand Greek?

St. Athanasius also says that his Disciples were divine men who spent their lives chanting the Psalms, studying Holy Scripture, fasting, and praying. Scripture was therefore translated into a language they understood. Now there is no likelihood that most of them understood any other language than Egyptian.

We learn the same thing from Palladius and Rufinus. Palladius says it expressly of St. John of Egypt — that admirable man in sanctity, so celebrated for the gift of prophecy which led him to predict the greatest victories Theodosius won over the tyrants. For he remarks that this Saint spoke to him through an interpreter — which he would not have done had he known Greek, since it is certain that Palladius, who was from Galatia, knew the Greek language perfectly. Now this teaches us two things. The one: that there were many persons in the Thebaid who did not know Greek but only Egyptian or Coptic — which the greatest light of the Thebaid being ignorant of, a great number of others of the same country might easily also be. The other: that the same was not the case in the monasteries of Nitria, which were closer to Alexandria and in Egypt properly so called. For Palladius, who had been for some time in one of the monasteries of the solitude of Nitria, would doubtless have learned enough Egyptian to understand it without an interpreter, if it had been the vernacular of that region. The same appears from Rufinus's account of St. Apollo, Superior of five hundred solitaries in that same desert of the Thebaid — for Rufinus says that when they were about to leave him, that Saint, wishing to give them brothers to conduct them to other monasteries, chose three who knew both Greek and Egyptian very well, so as to be able to serve as interpreters for them and to edify them by their conversations. It was therefore not a common thing among these solitaries

to know Greek in addition to Egyptian — for it was those who knew Greek that Rufinus and his companions needed, in order to be able to converse with them, and also to speak with the other solitaries who knew only Egyptian.

And if one adds to this that the principal occupation of these admirable solitaries was to read Holy Scripture and to learn even a great part of it by heart — as is said of those under the direction of St. Apollo, that some of them, after eating at the ninth hour of the day, went out into the desert where they spent the whole night meditating on passages of Scripture they knew by heart; and of St. Mucius, who, from being a pagan and a thief, had become a great Saint through a miraculous conversion, that he knew almost all of Holy Scripture by heart — can one doubt that Scripture was by that time already translated into Coptic for the Thebaid, and that it was in this language that it was read in public worship? There are copies of this Coptic version in the Royal Library, including among others one of the four Gospels, written some six hundred years ago on vellum by a Bishop of Damietta, which is of singular beauty. But as soon as this language ceased to be vernacular, they did in that country what I have just described as having been done with regard to Syriac: they retained the Coptic translations for divine worship, and made others in Arabic, which are found almost always facing these ancient Coptic ones. And the same was done by the other eastern nations.

All of this shows how very strange it is that such learned men as Cardinals Bellarmine and du Perron should have been able to advance something so manifestly false as to say that no ancient Author has made mention of any version of Scripture other than Greek and Latin, and that one finds nowhere in all antiquity any nation of the Roman Empire in which there existed any edition of Scripture other than in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin.

But further, upon what do they base this paradox? They produce only three or four proofs.

The first: that St. Augustine requires only knowledge of three languages — Greek, Latin, and Hebrew — for the understanding of Scripture. Cardinal du Perron cites for this *Augustine on the Wonders of Holy Scripture*, Book I, chapter 9 — which is an apocryphal work not by that Saint. But has Bellarmine more reason to cite for it the second book of *On Christian Doctrine*, chapter 11?

Nothing was ever more impertinently adduced on this subject than this passage of St. Augustine, the actual words of which are these: *Contra ignota signa propria magnum remedium est linguarum cognitio: et latinae quidem linguae homines quos nunc instruendos suscipimus duabus aliis ad Scripturarum cognitionem habent opus, hebraea scilicet et graeca, ut ad exemplaria praecedentia recurratur, si quam dubitationem attulerit Latinorum Interpretum infinita varietas.* For one can see thereby that St. Augustine, writing for those who knew Latin, proposes as necessary to the perfect understanding of Holy Scripture only knowledge of two other languages — Hebrew and Greek — because he regards these as the original languages of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and reasonably judges that when a version is obscure or ambiguous, there is nothing better than to

have recourse to the original. What bearing has this on knowing whether or not there were, in the time of that Father, versions of Scripture in other languages than Latin or Greek? And he must certainly have believed there were, since he says in the passage I cited above that the New Testament had been translated into different languages.

The second: that Sunnia and Fretela, writing to St. Jerome from Germany about the discrepancies between translations, bring him only the discrepancies between the Greek and Latin translations. Can this prove that Scripture was not translated into Egyptian, Syriac, Indian, Persian, or Ethiopian — as St. Chrysostom attests in his first Homily on St. John? Were those holy women required to put to St. Jerome difficulties about versions of Scripture in languages they did not understand? Was there ever a more deficient negative argument? But what lends it some colour is that these women are represented as writing to St. Jerome about the discrepancies between translations in general — from which the conclusion is adroitly drawn that, since they raise difficulties only about the discrepancy between the Greek and Latin translations, there were therefore no other translations than those. But the truth is that they only ask this Saint, concerning various passages of the Psalms where Greek and Latin seemed to them to conflict, which of the two conformed to the Hebrew original. Does it follow that, if there had been versions of Scripture in other languages — as there certainly were — they would have been obliged to speak of them? This would at most allow one to conclude that they knew of no others. And that would not even be altogether conclusive. But to pass from there to saying that there were therefore none — truly, it is astonishing that this could have occurred to the mind of an able man.

The third is a very common passage of St. Hilary, in the Prologue to his Commentary on the Psalms: *His maximè tribus linguis Sacramentum voluntatis Dei, et beati regni expectatio praedicatur, ex quo illud Pilati fuit, ut his tribus linguis Regem Judaeorum D. J. C. esse praescriberet.* Which Cardinal du Perron translated as: *In these languages principally is announced the Sacrament of the will of God, and the hope of the blessed kingdom — which was the reason why Pilate wrote in these three languages that Jesus Christ Our Lord was the King of the Jews.*

Who does not see that this passage proves the exact contrary of what they claim? For the word *maximè — principally —* makes it clear enough that this Saint does not say it was only in these three languages that Scripture was read, but only that it was principally in these three — which supposes he believed it was read in others as well. But one must further remark, with regard to the title of the Cross — when it is said in St. Luke and St. John that it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin — that one must understand (as in many other places in the New Testament) by the word *Hebrew* the Syriac language. For since it was not the Jews who composed this inscription — they complained of it, and it was Pilate who had it made in three languages so that everyone could read it — there is no likelihood he would have chosen ancient Hebrew, which was no longer in use; and it is far more probable that it was the new Hebrew — that is, Syriac — which was the vernacular of Jerusalem, and whence it has also

been called *lingua Hierosolymitana*. From this it follows that the Syriac language being one of the three that were consecrated by the title of the Cross, the mystery found therein ought to have applied to that language as well as to Latin — and thus one may attribute to a particular providence of God the fact that one of the most ancient versions of the New Testament is the Syriac.

The fourth proof of Cardinal du Perron I have some difficulty quoting, for truly it is not worthy of him. *One will never find*, he says, *any of the Fathers saying, when speaking of translations of Scripture: It reads thus in the language of my country*. One can readily see how little force a negative argument of this nature must have. But further: in which Fathers does he claim this ought to have been found? We have ancient Fathers only of those who wrote in Latin, Greek, or Syriac. (For as for the letters of St. Anthony, written originally in Egyptian, it is plain that this is not where one ought to find what Cardinal du Perron speaks of.) Now for those who wrote in Syriac, such as St. James of Nisibis and St. Ephrem — they can only serve to destroy what he wishes to establish, since it is agreed among all scholars, as I have already said, that long before them the Holy Scriptures, of both the Old and New Testament, were translated into Syriac, and that it was the word of God translated into that language which they cited and explained in their books.

And as for the Greek and Latin Fathers — how would one expect to find in their books *Such a passage of Scripture reads thus in the language of my country*, when the language of their country was Greek or Latin, and it was in one or the other of these two languages that they read and expounded Scripture?

I know well that Cardinal du Perron does not wish to concede this, and claims that Greek was not the vernacular of most of the countries of the East, nor Latin of most of those of the West. But this is certainly where he is mistaken. And since this question is important, and will serve to disentangle many things that M. Mallet confuses, I have judged it right to treat it in two separate chapters: in the first of which I shall examine what this learned Cardinal claims — that in the time of the Fathers, divine service was celebrated nowhere but in Greek and Latin; and in the second, what he maintains — that it was celebrated in Greek in many places whose vernacular language was not Greek, and likewise of Latin.

Chapter IX Whether in the Time of the Fathers Divine Service Was Nowhere Celebrated Except in Greek and Latin

Cardinal du Perron undertakes, in the *Reply*, in the first chapter of the sixth book, to answer the reproach that the King of England made against the Catholic Church for celebrating divine service in a language unknown to the people.

One must acknowledge that the manner in which he takes up the Church's defence is very reasonable. He maintains that it was never the design of the Church to deprive the people of knowledge of what is said in public worship, and that one cannot accuse the Roman Church of having deliberately introduced a foreign language into the Christian service; but that she judged, for very good reasons, that she ought to preserve the language in which it had been first instituted, even though with the passage of time it had ceased to be vernacular. And he shows this to have happened in all the various Christian communions and even in all Religions, true and false alike. For the Ethiopian language, he says, in which the service of the Ethiopians is celebrated, is vernacular to none of the nations under the King of Ethiopia, but is the ancient Ethiopian tongue, which they call Chaldaean. And he maintains the same of the Syriac, Armenian, and Egyptian languages: those in which divine service is now performed in those communions are not the vernacular tongues of the present day, but the ancient ones, which have ceased to be so. And as he shows, by very good arguments, that there would be great inconveniences in changing the language of the Church's service as often as the vernacular languages change, he had nothing further to add — the Church being thereby sufficiently justified.

But he went further without necessity. For the King of England having objected that this usage of celebrating divine service in a language unknown to the people was contrary to the practice of the primitive Church, he had only to answer in conformity with the principles he had already established — that in order to conclude anything against the Roman Church from what was done in the primitive Church, it would have to be shown that when the languages in which her service had first been instituted ceased to be vernacular and commonly understood by the people, she abandoned them in favour of the new languages that had succeeded the old. And as it was easy to prove that the primitive Church made no such changes in the Liturgy, it follows that if the service remained intelligible to the people throughout those early times, this was because the people had not changed their language — whereas having since changed throughout the whole West, it is no surprise that the language of public worship, which the Church did not judge fitting to change, became less intelligible to the people than it had formerly been.

This would have been enough to answer the King of England's objection, and all reasonable persons would have been satisfied with it. But this Cardinal believed he ought to go further; for having wished to maintain what Cardinal Bellarmine had advanced before him, he committed himself to showing that public worship was celebrated in many places in a

language unknown to the people. And he does so by maintaining two things, neither of which is true — above all in the scope he gives them.

The first is that, by the testimony of the whole ancient Church, the service was never performed, in the time of the ancient Fathers, in the Christian Religion, in any language but two — namely, Greek and Latin.

The second is that Greek was not the vernacular language in several of the countries where the service was performed in Greek, nor Latin in several of those where it was performed in Latin.

I reserve the treatment of this second proposition for the following chapter, and examine only the first in this one. For it to be true, it is not enough that the service was performed in Greek in most of the Eastern Churches — which is certain. It would have to have been performed in Greek in all of them without exception — which is not the case; and the proof this Cardinal adduces does not show it. For here is all he has to say on the matter:

> *As regards the Eastern Church: that the service was performed there only in Greek appears from the fact that Scripture was publicly read in the Churches only in Greek — as shown by St. Jerome, who says in his Preface on Chronicles: Alexandria and Egypt praises in her Septuagint the Author Hesychius; Constantinople unto Antioch approves the exemplars of the Martyr Lucian; and the intermediate provinces read the Palestinian copies elaborated by Origen, Eusebius, and Pamphilius. And it is known that the Liturgy of St. Basil was common throughout all the East, as appears from these words of Peter the Greek Deacon to St. Fulgentius: In the prayer of the Sacred Altar, he says, which almost all the East frequents.*

This is all that Cardinal du Perron was able to find in all antiquity to prove that the service was performed only in Greek in all the Eastern Churches, and that Scripture was read there only in Greek.

Now as for this last passage, from Peter the Deacon, it proves nothing at all — for the Latin reads *quam paene universus frequentat Oriens*, and the translation renders it *which almost all the East frequents*. He who says *almost all the East* does not say *all the East*; and it is all the East that is at issue. For no one doubts that in almost all the East the service was performed in Greek; but the question is to prove that it was performed in no Eastern Church in any language other than Greek — something that passage clearly cannot prove, since it rather suggests the contrary.

The passage from St. Jerome proves it equally little. This Father, in that Preface, justifies himself against those who disapproved of his translating the Bible from Hebrew into Latin. He says he would not have done so had the edition of the Septuagint remained in its original purity; and he proves that it had not, because there were three different forms of it — one revised by Hesychius, read in Alexandria and Egypt; another revised by Lucian, read in the countries extending from Constantinople to Antioch (which is to be understood exclusively);

and the one Origen had corrected, which the Martyr Pamphilius and Eusebius had published, read in the countries between the two — that is, in Antioch and the Syria dependent on it. Now this can only indicate which of these three forms of the Septuagint was publicly read in various Churches where the service was performed in Greek. As for private persons, they could read whichever they wished, or all three forms comparing them together, or whichever pleased them most. And yet he adds that the whole earth had divided itself among these three forms: *Totusque orbis hac inter se trifaria varietate compugnat*. This certainly does not mean that the Greek Septuagint was publicly read in all the Churches of the world — since it is indubitable that it was not read in the Churches of the West. And thus the true sense of this passage is that wherever the service was performed in Greek, the Septuagint was read in one or another of these three forms.

And indeed, one has no certainty that the division he makes of the provinces where the Septuagint was read embraces all the Eastern Churches. For how can one prove that Mesopotamia and Armenia are included therein, or even the Thebaid — the word *Egypt* being able to exclude it, as when one says the Patriarchate of Alexandria comprised Egypt, the Thebaid, and Eastern Libya? And as for Ethiopia, it is quite clear that it cannot be understood under any of the provinces St. Jerome named. There are also very strong reasons to believe that in these four regions — Mesopotamia, Armenia, the Thebaid, and Ethiopia — the public service was always performed either in Syriac, or in Armenian, or in Egyptian, or in Ethiopian.

The first reason, which is general for all these languages, is drawn from what Cardinal du Perron himself maintains: that the Syriac, Armenian, Egyptian, and Ethiopian languages in which public worship is now performed in the Syrian, Armenian, Egyptian, and Ethiopian Churches are no longer intelligible to the common people, but are the ancient languages of those countries, which have long ceased to be vernacular. From this he concludes, as I have already said, that Protestants have no cause to blame the Roman Church for performing the service in Latin, since she has done nothing but preserve the language in which the ancient Roman Church celebrated the service — which she has in common with the Jewish Church and all the Churches of the world; that is, the Greek, Syrian, Armenian, Egyptian, and Ethiopian Churches he had previously named. He therefore supposes that all these Churches have done as the Roman Church has done — that is, that they have preserved the ancient language in which divine service was first instituted when those nations embraced the Christian Religion.

This learned Cardinal saw that one could make the following objection against him — for it follows naturally from what he had established. And to forestall it, he claimed that these four latter languages had only been introduced into public worship since those Churches had separated themselves from the Catholic Church over various heresies. He insinuates this adroitly on page 1084: *What has preserved these ancient languages* (he says — meaning the Armenian and the three others) *is that those who separated themselves from the Catholic Church, when these languages were still vernacular, and wished to do as the innovators of*

today, namely to put the service into their own tongue, have not, since that first innovation, changed the language of their service, even though it has changed in the common usage of men.

His system is therefore this: that in all the Eastern Churches without exception, divine service was performed only in Greek for as long as they all remained in communion with the Catholic Church; but that when the Syrian, Armenian, Egyptian, and Ethiopian Churches separated from the Catholic Church by embracing the heresy of Nestorius or that of the Acephalites, it was only then that they did what the Protestants have done in recent centuries — that is, they abandoned Greek in the divine service and each performed it in their own language, which was still vernacular at the time; but that after this first innovation, they did not change the language of their service even when the language in which they performed it, having ceased to be spoken in the Greek manner, had ceased to be vernacular.

But:

1°. One readily sees that by this he greatly weakens what he had established in defence of the Roman Church against Protestant accusations — namely, that in preserving Latin in public worship, she did nothing but what all other Churches had done. For Protestants could have said to him: this is not true; since of the five great Christian communions you have named — the Greeks, the Syrians, the Armenians, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians — four, by your own admission, did as we have done: they changed the Greek in which they had all formerly performed divine service, each taking their own language instead, so that all the people could understand what was said there. And if since then they have continued to use these ancient languages after they ceased to be vernacular, they have done so through an unreasonable caprice and in self-contradiction — and so their example cannot be opposed to us, since it tells more in our favour than against us.

2°. It is very strange that something so important to establish as this supposed first innovation should be stated in a kind of parenthesis, without any proof whatsoever — which alone should be enough to reject what is thus advanced without support.

3°. There are circumstances in this system which render it altogether incredible. One would have it that four great nations, very remote from one another, all resolved to change the language of their Liturgy — which was Greek — and each took the language proper to themselves and intelligible to all their peoples. And one would have it that these same four nations all contradicted themselves thereafter, not one of them being willing to make a second innovation, which good sense and reason obliged them to make if they had made the first. For if they changed from Greek because it had ceased to be vernacular, why would they not have changed a second time when their own languages ceased also to be intelligible to the people? Highly unreasonable things are not to be supposed without proof; and one can still less suppose, without very strong foundation, that four great nations, very remote from one another, are found to be united by chance in a course of conduct altogether contrary to reason.

4°. Can one conceive that this innovation was made in four great nations without any Author having spoken of it; without anyone among those peoples having opposed it; without the orthodox Churches from which the schismatic ones had separated having reproached them for it at all? If it were said that the service had always been performed in Syriac or Armenian in certain Churches, and that this had gradually spread to several others, this might be plausible — for it can happen that what comes about gradually goes unnoticed. But that there being no Church in the world where the service was performed in Syriac or Armenian, these Churches on separating from the others by schism should have all at once abandoned Greek and taken up Syriac or Armenian, without any trace remaining to us of this change in all the Authors who have spoken of the separation of those Churches, and without anyone having said a single word against this innovation — truly, no man of good sense could persuade himself of this.

But beyond these general arguments, there are particular ones for each of these languages. Let us begin with Syriac.

It is in truth a surprising thing that so able a man as this Cardinal could have persuaded himself that in the time of the Fathers the divine service was performed in no Church in the world except in Greek and in Latin. He ought at least to have added: *and in Syriac.* For nothing is more certain than that it was performed in that language in a very great number of Churches. But to know where, certain observations must first be made on the names *Syria* and *Syrian* as they were used in the time of the Fathers.

The word *Syria* is taken either more narrowly, for the particular province otherwise called Coele-Syria or Lower Syria — the province of which the Patriarch of Antioch was Metropolitan in particular, and from which a second Syria was later formed with Apamea as metropolis — or more broadly, for a collection of provinces bounded by Cilicia, the Euphrates, and Egypt. One of these provinces was Euphratesia, whose metropolis was Hierapolis, believed to be Aleppo. This was where Cyrrhus was, of which Theodoret was Bishop; and so it was only in Syria in this second and broader sense.

The County or Diocese of the East comprised all of Syria taken in this second sense, as well as Cilicia, Isauria, Osroene, and Mesopotamia. And this County of the East formed the Patriarchate of Antioch, except for the island of Cyprus, which had itself declared independent of it at the Council of Ephesus.

Mesopotamia, taken as all that lies between the Euphrates and the Tigris, was divided in two. The part toward the Tigris bore alone, in the time of the Fathers, the name of Mesopotamia; it had Amida as its metropolis, and this was where Nisibis was, which had for its Bishop the great St. James, so celebrated for his holiness and miracles. The other was called Osroene, whose metropolis was Edessa — a very celebrated Church, whose Kings were the first Christian Kings, and where there was a public School like the one in Alexandria.

The inhabitants of the country beyond the Euphrates are often called Syrians — as St. Ephrem, Deacon of Edessa, is often called Ephrem Syrus. And St. Jerome, in the *Life of Malchus*, says he was a Syrian, though he was from the territory of Nisibis in Mesopotamia; but this is because of the Syriac language they spoke, which is why St. Jerome says of Malchus only that he was a Syrian while adding that he spoke the Syriac language very well. For the countries beyond the Euphrates were not in fact called Syria.

I find in this connection a passage in Origen that I do not believe has been remarked upon. It is in the seventh book of his work against Celsus. He says that if a Greek wished to instruct Egyptians and Syrians in holy doctrine, he would take care to learn their language, preferring to speak in what the Greeks call a barbarous manner rather than to be useless in speaking his own tongue. He therefore supposes that there were in his time Syrians and Egyptians who did not understand Greek. Yet he could not be unaware that Greek was very well understood throughout all of Syria of which Antioch was the metropolis. He must therefore have meant by these Syrians either some of those on the western side of the Euphrates but far from Antioch, or those on the eastern side who were called Syrians on account of their language, though their country was not called Syria. And by the Egyptians, he must have meant those of the Thebaid, where the ancient Egyptian language, otherwise called Coptic, had always been preserved; for he himself, being from Egypt and having been raised at Alexandria, knew perfectly well that Greek was the vernacular of that city and of the greater part of Egypt.

To return to the Syriac language: it is useful to have established these distinctions in order to avoid equivocation. For in Syria proper — entirely on the western side of the Euphrates — one might speak and understand Syriac, as many people understand French in Brabant; but the dominant and wholly vernacular language was Greek, as Flemish is the proper language of Brabant. Whereas on the eastern side of the Euphrates, in Osroene and Mesopotamia, some might understand Greek; but the dominant and wholly vernacular language was Syriac. And this is why divine service was ordinarily performed in Greek on the western side of the Euphrates, and even in Euphratesia which adjoined it, as in the diocese of Cyrrhus. But the question is whether on the eastern side, where many persons understood nothing but Syriac, the service was performed in Greek or in Syriac. And even on the western side, where there might be those who knew only Syriac — as there could be in villages where ancient languages sometimes long persist — whether it was not thought fitting that the public prayers should be said in Syriac. And of this I do not see how one can doubt.

St. James of Nisibis, who was, as I said, under the metropolis of Amida in Mesopotamia, composed several books on Scripture and matters of Religion — all in Syriac, as Gennadius attests — and it is said these books are still in the East. Is it plausible that he would have written nothing in Greek if the service of his Church had been performed in Greek, and if the Holy Scriptures had been read there only in that language?

St. Ephrem proves the same for Osroene. He was Deacon of Edessa, its metropolis. He likewise wrote only in Syriac. But his books were found so excellent that several were

translated into Greek even in St. Jerome's time. And what St. Basil says of him in the passage of his *Hexaemeron* cited in the preceding chapter — there being every likelihood that this is the Syrian of whom he speaks — makes it clear enough that he did not know Greek. For it can only be for this reason that he calls him a Syrian who was as far removed from worldly wisdom as he was advanced in the knowledge of truth: which can only be founded on the fact that, not knowing Greek, he had been unable to read the Greek books that the Greek Fathers regarded as containing all they called worldly wisdom.

What is still more decisive: the Acts of the Council of Berytus, in the case of Ibas, Bishop of Edessa, which were read at the tenth session of the Council of Chalcedon, make manifest what I have said above — that Greek was the vernacular of the provinces of the Patriarchate of Antioch on the western side of the Euphrates, but that on the eastern side, though many there understood Greek, it was Syriac that was the vernacular, and that there were Bishops who understood only that language. From which it manifestly follows that the divine service and the reading of Holy Scripture were performed there not in Greek but in Syriac. For it is absurd to imagine that Scripture would have been read in a language the Bishop himself did not understand. There is therefore only this fact to prove; and these Acts leave no room to doubt it. For the case of Ibas, Bishop of Edessa, accused on several counts by the Clergy of his Church, having been committed to three Bishops — two of whom were from the western side of the Euphrates, namely Photius, Bishop of Tyre, and Eustathius, Bishop of Berytus, and the third from the eastern side, namely Uranius, Bishop of Himeria in Osroene — the Acts record that the accusers of Ibas asked at the outset that what was said in Greek be interpreted into Syriac for Uranius; which was granted them in these terms: *It is right that there be someone to interpret for the most religious Bishop Uranius what shall be said.* And after the Petition that these accusers had presented to the three Bishops against Ibas had been read, they added: *We request your justice that this be said in Syriac to the most holy Bishop Uranius.* To which the Bishops Photius and Eustathius replied: *Maras, who is present here, will explain in his own language to the most religious Uranius what has just been read.* Which having been done, those two Bishops in turn requested that what Uranius had said in Syriac concerning what had passed at Constantinople regarding this same affair of Ibas be explained to them — which Maras did likewise.

Can anything more express be desired to refute two things that Cardinal du Perron maintained? The one: that it was not Greek but Syriac that was the vernacular of Syria — for would those two Bishops of Tyre and Berytus, which are two cities of Syria, have needed interpreters to understand the vernacular of their own country? The other: that the public service was performed nowhere in all the East except in Greek. For, as I have already said, would the service have been performed in Greek in Osroene and Mesopotamia, where even Bishops understood nothing but Syriac?

One also sees in the Council of Constantinople under Mennas, in the time of Justinian, that it is noted of certain Bishops from those countries that they had signed in Syriac — which sufficiently shows that they did not know Greek.

But there are two passages in the *Historia Religiosa* of Theodoret that show that even on the western side of the Euphrates, it was permitted for those who knew only Syriac to perform the service in that language.

The first is in chapter 4, where speaking of the Disciples of St. Eusebius, whose monastery was between Antioch and Beroea, he says that they sang the praises of their Creator — some in Greek, and others *in the language of the country* (ἐγχωρίῳ φωνῇ), which could only have been Syriac.

The other is in chapter 5, where he speaks of St. Publius, who, having been born in the city of Zeugma on the bank of the Euphrates but on the western side, and having built a small cell thirty stadia from that city, the example of his piety caused many to join him — of whom Theodoret remarks that, serving God with ardour, they celebrated His praises in Greek. But he adds that some from the surrounding area, who knew no language but that of the country (perhaps some from the eastern side of the Euphrates, from which this monastery was no more than about a league and a half distant, or from the nearby villages where the Syriac language, which was more ancient in that country than the Greek, had been preserved) — entering into the desire to lead a similar life, they besought the Saint to receive them under his guidance, which he did not believe he should refuse them, remembering Our Lord's words to His Apostles: *Go and instruct all peoples, of whatever nations they may be.* He then made another dwelling for them and built a chapel, where he ordered both groups to assemble every day, morning and evening, for the Office and to sing the praises of God — each group in its own language, one after the other. Which continues, says Theodoret, even to this day, neither time — which ordinarily alters all things — nor those who succeeded this holy man having touched or thought fitting to touch what he had ordained, though since his death this holy community has had successively not merely two or three but many Superiors. For after his blessed end, Theoctene had charge of those who spoke Greek, and Aphthonius of those who knew only Syriac. Is it not clear from this that in that time there was no law, nor any custom, obliging the service to be performed only in Greek in that country, and that it could be performed indifferently in either Greek or Syriac according to which of the two languages the people understood best? For if that had not been so, would this holy Anchorite have ordered that the praises of God be sung publicly in the same Church — in Greek by those who knew Greek, and in Syriac by those who knew only Syriac? And would Theodoret have approved of this and regarded as a praiseworthy thing that it had been continued until his own time?

One must not omit either what St. Jerome says, in the Life of St. Paula, that at her funeral Psalms were recited in order in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Syriac, not only during three days and until her body had been buried close to Our Lord's Manger, but also throughout the whole

week — which marks a regulated divine Office, performed in Syriac as well as in the other languages.

But the use of the Syriac language in the Liturgy is so commonly acknowledged to be as ancient as that of Greek and Latin, that one would have to set oneself in opposition without reason to the most ancient traditions of the Church to deny it. For what Cardinal Bona says of it, in his book on the Liturgies, is the most common opinion of theologians (Book I, c. 6):

> *It seems to me that one may affirm that the Apostles and their successors made use in the Liturgy, in each country, of the language that was vernacular in that country; and thus at Jerusalem, they celebrated it in Chaldaean, otherwise called Syriac; at Antioch, Alexandria, and other Greek cities, in Greek; and at Rome and throughout the West, in Latin. The proof thereof is a very ancient and immemorial tradition of the Churches. For one finds in all the West no ancient Liturgies but Latin ones; nor in the East any but Greek ones, used by the Greeks and Melchites, and Chaldaean ones (also called Syriac), used by the Maronites, Nestorians, and Jacobites.*

Jacques Ledesma, a Jesuit, in a book entitled *De Divinis Scripturis quavis Lingua passim non legendis* (On the Holy Scriptures not being publicly read in just any language), chapter 8, n. 5, also maintains that those who celebrate Mass in Chaldaean do so by a tradition as ancient as those who celebrate it in Greek and Latin.

All of this shows that the use of the Syriac language in the Liturgy is as ancient as that of Greek and Latin, and that nothing is more ill-founded than Cardinal du Perron's claim that this language was only adopted in public worship when the Churches where it was vernacular separated from the Catholic Church by schism and heresy.

He says the same of the Armenians with equally little foundation. For I find a convincing proof of the contrary in the Life of St. Sabas, who was in great repute toward the end of the fifth century, written by one of his disciples:

> *At that same time, a certain Jeremiah, Armenian by nation, a most holy man upon whom God had poured extraordinary graces, came to find St. Sabas, followed by two of his disciples named Peter and Paul. The Saint rejoiced greatly at the coming of these excellent Armenians, and gave them the small cell he had inhabited when he dwelt alone, along the torrent, as well as the small Oratory near it, so that they might there sing the praises of God in their language on Saturday and Sunday. These same Armenians were the occasion of other men of their country coming afterwards to increase the number of the Solitaries of the Laura of St. Sabas; so that the Oratory he had given them at first being too small, he built a new Church for the other Solitaries, and transferred the Armenians to the old one; where they read the Gospel and performed the whole Liturgy in their language, then came to receive Communion in the Church of the Greeks. St. Sabas required them only to sing the Trisagion in Greek*

— to be more certain they would not add to it the words who suffered for us, as Peter Fullo, who had usurped the See of Antioch, had wished to be done in favour of the heresy of Eutyches.

One judges easily that these Armenians, who came to find St. Sabas in Palestine, performed the divine service in their language only because it was thus performed in their country. And yet the Armenians were at that time still in communion with the Catholic Churches, their separation having come only afterwards. One cannot therefore maintain what Cardinal du Perron claims — that the Armenians always performed the service in Greek while they were Catholic, and only began to perform it in Armenian when they were no longer in communion with the orthodox Churches.

Here is an altogether similar story from the same period. Bollandus has given us the Life of St. Theodosius, a contemporary of St. Sabas and likewise an Abbot near Jerusalem (January 11, p. 692). It is said in this Life, §37–38: *That he had, like St. Sabas, one monastery of Greeks, and another of Armenians, and a third of Besses, each performing the Office in their own language at the Seven Canonical Hours; but when they were to participate in the Sacraments, there was a very wisely instituted rule, which was that until the Gospel each heard the divine Scriptures in his own Church and in his own language, and thereafter they all assembled in the great Church of the Greeks, where they received the Eucharist — which is observed to this day.* Here then are more Armenians performing the Office in their own language, even in Palestine; and moreover Christians of another country as well — namely the Besses — performing it in theirs. Now these Besses were barbarian peoples of Thrace and neighbouring countries, placed sometimes near the Danube, sometimes near the Hebrus and Mount Haemus. St. Paulinus places them in Dacia, south of the Danube, as appears from these verses:

For once alike in lands and savage souls, And Besses, harder than their native snows, Now made as sheep and gathered by your lead Into the court of peace.

Bollandus says their language was perhaps Slavonic, *quae latè*, he says, *per septentrionem in Officio Ecclesiastico usurpatur* — which is widely used in the North for the ecclesiastical office. Whatever it may be, this is a further proof against Cardinal du Perron's claim that in those times the divine Office was performed, throughout the whole Catholic Church, only in Greek or Latin.

As for the Egyptians, I have nothing to add to what I said in the preceding chapter on the Egyptian or Coptic language; for the Life of St. Anthony alone, written by St. Athanasius, is enough to persuade all fair-minded persons that it was in that language that Scripture was read and divine service performed in the Thebaid.

The same may be said of Ethiopia. For there is no likelihood either that at the time when the Christian Religion was established there, Greek was understood, or that the divine service was

initially celebrated in a language no one understood. No example of this will be found in the first centuries of the Church; and what I have already cited from Cardinal Bona is most certain — that the Apostles and their successors made use in the Liturgy, in each country they converted to Christianity, of the language that was vernacular in that country.

I find an admirable proof of this in a passage from Origen that I do not believe has yet been cited. It is in the eighth book against Celsus (p. 402), where he answers a reproach that this pagan Philosopher made against Christians for wishing that barbarian names should have a certain efficacy in prayer that Greek and Roman names did not have. Origen maintains that Celsus is misrepresenting the Christians and does not understand their Religion. *For what Divinity*, he says, *do we invoke by a barbarian name?* He indicates however that certain heretics might have this custom:

> *But as for the other Christians, they are so far from affecting barbarous words in their prayers that they do not even use the Hebrew names by which God is called in Scripture — the Greeks employing Greek words, the Romans Roman ones, and all other peoples praying to God and praising God each in their own language. For God, being the master of all languages, hears those who pray to Him in so many different languages as though they all prayed in the same tongue. And He is not as men, who, knowing some one language whether barbarian or Greek, are ignorant of others, and take no notice of those who speak a different tongue.*

Does one not clearly see, from this passage, that already in the time of Origen God was praised in the language of each country where the Gospel had been received?

Nothing is therefore more contrary to truth than the first of Cardinal du Perron's two propositions which I have thought it necessary to examine: that during the first five centuries of the Church, divine service was performed, throughout the whole earth and in all Christian Churches, only in Greek and Latin. We shall show in the following chapter that the second is no better founded.

Chapter X Whether in the Time of the Fathers Divine Service Was Celebrated in Greek in Many Countries Whose Vernacular Language Was Not Greek, and Whether the Same Was True of Latin

The second proposition of Cardinal du Perron that remains to be examined is his claim that in the time of the first four Councils, Greek was not the vernacular language in many of the countries where the service was performed only in Greek, nor Latin in many of those where it was performed only in Latin. He attempted to prove this with more care and at greater length; but in order better to lay bare the weakness of all his proofs, I think it right first to establish certain maxims which, it seems to me, cannot reasonably be contested.

The first is that a language is called vernacular when it is commonly spoken in a country and learned there through use; and since moral matters ought to be judged morally and not with metaphysical exactness, a language does not cease to be the vernacular of a country merely because some persons there do not understand it, provided their number is much smaller than the number of those who do.

The second is that the vernacular language of cities ought to pass for the vernacular of a country, since cities are its most considerable part.

The third is that, although the same language may not be spoken equally well in all the cities of a kingdom — being spoken more purely in some and much more badly in others — it is still said to be the vernacular of the whole kingdom, provided that those who speak it best are commonly understood in the very places where it is spoken badly.

The fourth is that a language is still reckoned the vernacular of an entire kingdom when it is understood in almost all parts of it, even though in various provinces there may be particular dialects and jargons rather different from the common tongue, and even though peasants in certain places understand only these jargons. This is why one cannot deny that French is the vernacular of all France, though the peasants of Gascony speak Gascon, those of Languedoc speak Languedocian, those of Provence speak Provençal, and those of Poitou speak Poitevin.

The fifth is that there may be in the same city two different vernacular languages; as in Brussels there are Flemish and French — because it is possible for two languages to be learned there without any formal instruction, by use alone, and to be commonly understood and spoken by the greater part of the inhabitants, both men and women, learned and ignorant alike.

The sixth — and this is one of the surest marks for judging what the vernacular language of a country or city is — is to observe in what language preaching is ordinarily done there; for there is no reason to doubt that in whatever century of the Church, the language in which the word of God has been preached in each country has been the vernacular of those to whom it was preached. What has happened in recent centuries is an infallible proof of this. For although

the Latin Church continued to perform her service in Latin after it ceased to be vernacular and was no longer understood by the people, she took good care not to do the same in the preaching of the word of God; and we see that in each country everyone preaches in his own language — in French in France, in Italian in Italy, in Spanish in Spain, and so on throughout all the other countries of Europe.

From this one can draw a demonstrative argument against what Cardinal du Perron undertakes to establish — above all when reasoning as he reasons, claiming that a thing was not done in antiquity when no ancient Author has mentioned it. For it is by this method that he believes he has proven there were no translations of Scripture other than in Latin and Greek — because he supposes (falsely) that no ancient Author has spoken of any other. Yet I maintain likewise that one will find no ancient Author informing us that in the time of the ancient Fathers, preaching was done otherwise than in Greek in all the Eastern Churches where the Scriptures were read in Greek, or otherwise than in Latin in all the Western Churches where they were read in Latin. This must therefore be taken as certain; and this being so, one must also concede, against what this Cardinal maintains, that Greek and Latin were the vernacular languages of all those Churches — since it would be to attribute to the Church a ridiculous and unworthy conduct to suppose she had preaching done in a language that the common faithful did not understand.

This alone overturns all the arguments that this learned man adduces after Bellarmine, to show that Greek was not the vernacular language of several of the countries where public worship was performed in Greek, nor Latin of most of those where it was performed in Latin. For this can have no plausibility whatsoever unless one simultaneously shows that in those countries where Greek is claimed not to have been the vernacular, preaching was done in another language than Greek — and similarly for Latin. Now this can never be shown with regard to the time of the ancient Fathers. One cannot therefore say with the least plausibility that in those early centuries Greek and Latin were not the vernacular languages of all the countries where public worship was performed in one or the other of these two tongues.

All of these arguments therefore go only to prove that in those times, beyond the Greek language — which the conquests of Alexander and the dominion of his successors had made the vernacular of all those regions of the East where the Holy Scriptures were read in Greek — and beyond the Latin language which Roman dominion had likewise made the vernacular of all the countries of the West where they were read in Latin, there remained some use of old languages not yet entirely abolished; but that this persisted mostly in villages and among rural people, as Cardinal du Perron himself seems to concede at the end of his discourse, where he restricts himself to saying that *the simple villagers and rustics of Africa and Europe did not understand Latin, any more than the rustics of all the provinces of the East understood Greek*. But he pushes his proofs much further at the outset — maintaining generally, without confining himself to rustics and villagers alone, that Greek was not the vernacular of the Cappadocians, Galatians, Lycaonians, Egyptians, or Syrians; and what is still more

extraordinary, that Latin was vernacular nowhere outside Italy and the cities of the Roman Colonies scattered throughout the Empire, such as Carthage; and that outside those cities, in other countries such as Africa, the Gauls, and Spain, only the learned, those employed in public affairs, or persons of elevated condition knew it.

I acknowledge that if this were so, one would be right to say that outside the Roman Colonies — which were not in such great number — the Latin language was vernacular only in Italy, and that throughout all the other Western Provinces, the old languages of each country would have to be regarded as the vernacular of each region. For the learned, those employed in affairs, and persons of elevated condition making up not one twentieth of the inhabitants of a city, it would have followed, on this hypothesis, that outside Italy nineteen parts in twenty of the inhabitants of every city did not understand Latin but only the old languages of those countries.

But the falsity of this hypothesis is clearer than daylight. For what would have come of the sermons — which cannot be shown to have been given in any language other than Latin in the Western Church of that time — for those nineteen parts of the inhabitants of cities who would not have understood it? And why does St. Augustine, to whom all souls were so dear, show no distress at the fact that most of his diocesans were deprived of the fruit they might have drawn from his sermons — because, being neither learned, nor employed in affairs, nor of elevated condition, they did not understand Latin? Why does it not occur to him, in the beautiful precepts he gives for good preaching in his books *On Christian Doctrine*, to represent the necessity of learning the Punic language in order to instruct the greater part of the Christians of Africa, who are claimed not to have understood any other? Why had he himself not learned to speak it, so as to be as useful to the greater part of his people — claimed to have known nothing but Punic — as to the much smaller number of those who understood Latin?

All of this being absurd, one must return to the truth, which is that in Africa in St. Augustine's time, in all the cities — which were very numerous, there being more than 400 Bishoprics — there was no other vernacular language than Latin, understood and known by great and small, men and women, learned and ignorant, those employed in affairs no less than those who were not; but that the old Punic language had been preserved among the peasants of the villages, who had had little commerce with the cities and who are also observed to have generally been the last to embrace Christianity — whence it came about that the word *pagani* (pagans) came to signify those who were not Christians. And the number of these village Christians must have been very inconsiderable, since St. Augustine marks nowhere, so far as I know, how they were instructed — which gives reason to believe it was not by public sermons, but only by catechisms and private instructions given to them in their villages by certain Priests who knew both languages. But when I say this number was small, I mean only those who in Africa knew nothing but Punic, or elsewhere some similar tongue, without understanding either Greek or Latin; for as for those who, knowing Greek in the East or Latin in the West, also knew one of these old languages, it matters not to me how great their number may have been — for this

would only prove that there were two vernacular languages in those countries, which is possible; but not that Greek or Latin was not the vernacular there, which alone is at issue.

The same is true of the other peoples of the West subject to Roman rule. For this imperial city, says St. Augustine (City of God, Book XIX, chapter 5), *not only subjected to her dominion the nations she had conquered, but also imposed upon them a kind of necessity of knowing her language.* Pliny takes it differently, and wishes this to be regarded as a benefit the Romans brought to mankind, by binding together through a single language the commerce of so many nations that had previously had tongues so varied and so barbarous.

This is the reason given by Lipsius, in his dialogue *De recta pronunciatione Latinae linguae*, for why the true pronunciation of Latin is now so corrupted. He says that the Latin language remained very confined for nearly six hundred years; but that afterwards, in a short time, it spread everywhere — both through the Colonies, and because the right of Roman citizenship was granted to many among the peoples formerly regarded as barbarians, which obliged them to speak its tongue. *"Thus,"* he says, *"for the good of mankind this language made such progress that Plutarch says that in his time it was spoken everywhere. But it was principally toward the West and the North. For the Greeks and Easterners did not adopt with the same ease a language they found far less beautiful than their own. But for those of Africa, the Gauls, Spain, Pannonia, and England, they took it up with joy; and this new language soon abolished their old ones."* Apuleius testifies to this for Africa in his *Floridas*, and the sermons of St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, and the other Fathers of that nation confirm it. For the Gauls, Strabo says already in the time of Augustus that one ought no longer to call them barbarians, having adopted the customs of the Romans as well as their language. He says the same of the Spaniards, and Velleius of those of Pannonia. And it appears from Tacitus that Agricola led the English, who had previously disdained to use the Latin tongue, to desire even to be eloquent in it. All of this being as it were beyond doubt, this learned man concludes that the true pronunciation of this language was not preserved among so many nations, who mingled in its pronunciation sounds recurring from their old tongues. He therefore regards it as a certain principle, from which he draws this conclusion, that the Latin language had become the vernacular in Africa, Spain, the Gauls, England, and the Pannonias.

I do not know after this whether it would be necessary to answer all of Cardinal du Perron's proofs, which are almost the same as Bellarmine's. I shall do so nonetheless, so that no one may think them stronger than I have represented them. Here they are.

Du Perron: *It appears from St. Basil that the Mesopotamians had a language particular to themselves.*

Reply: This is true — for they spoke Syriac. But it is equally true that the service was performed there not in Greek but in Syriac, as I have already shown in the preceding chapter.

Du Perron: *It also appears from the same St. Basil that the Cappadocians had a language proper to themselves.*

Reply: This may have been a dialect of Greek. But whatever it was, this would not have prevented Greek from being also the vernacular of the region. And if it had not been so, how would the ignorant and women have understood what St. Basil said to them in his Sermons?

Du Perron: *That Greek was not the vernacular of the Galatians, St. Jerome testifies — saying that the language of the Galatians was similar to that of the Gauls near Trier.*

Reply: Cardinal du Perron must have taken this passage from Bellarmine, and Bellarmine must have taken it from the Jesuit Ledesma, without either having consulted the original. For as it stands in St. Jerome, in the Prologue to the second book of his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, it not only does not prove what these Cardinals claim, but confirms what we have remarked, and what may serve as the solution to all their arguments: that there may be a particular jargon in a country without preventing another and nobler language from also being the vernacular of that country. Here are St. Jerome's own words: *Unum est quod inferimus... Galatas excepto sermone graeco quo omnis Oriens loquitur propriam linguam eamdem pene habere quam Treviros* — that is, the Galatians have, besides the Greek which all the East speaks, a tongue proper to themselves similar to that of those near Trier. There were therefore, according to St. Jerome, two vernacular languages in Galatia: one proper to them, a kind of old Gaulish; and another which was Greek, common to them with all the East. And this must indeed have been so; for one cannot reasonably suppose that St. Paul preached the Gospel to the Galatians in any other language than the one in which he wrote to them. Now he wrote to them in Greek. He therefore also preached the Gospel to them in Greek. And he preached it without doubt in the language most commonly understood in the countries where he preached — for it was for this very purpose that the Apostles had received the gift of tongues. And thus this single passage is enough to ruin all the objections of this Cardinal, and principally the following one.

Du Perron: *That Greek was not the vernacular of the Lycaonians appears because the history of the Acts remarks that the Lycaonians raised their voices, saying in Lycaonian: Gods in the likeness of men have come down to us.*

Reply: Nothing is weaker than what he adds to show that one cannot say St. Luke intended to note only a diversity of dialect and not a diversity of language — namely, that if it had been only a diversity of dialect, he would not have reported the words in ordinary Greek, but in Lycaonian Greek; and the only reason he gives for this is that Plato did so to note the diversity of the Theban dialect. As if St. Luke had been obliged to imitate Plato; and as if he could not, had he wished to, have reported this in the Lycaonians' own words even if Lycaonian had been an altogether different language from Greek — just as there are things reported in Syriac in the Gospels, which are written in Greek, though Greek and Syriac are altogether different languages. But moreover, even if there had been in Lycaonia, as in Galatia, a particular jargon

spoken by the lower sort of people — who were apparently those who, having seen St. Paul heal the lame man, cried out that gods in the likeness of men had come down to them — does not the example of the Galatians show that this would not have prevented Greek from being also their common language, as it was for the Galatians and the other Eastern provinces? And if it had not been so, St. Luke would have noted that it was also in Lycaonian that St. Paul addressed them in that admirable discourse by which he prevented them from sacrificing to him — for he assuredly did not speak to them in a language they would not have understood. To which one may add that in the three hundred and fifty years that had elapsed between that encounter of St. Paul and the time of the Fathers of whom we speak, this Lycaonian jargon could easily either have been abolished or its use greatly diminished — the dominant languages, and above all so beautiful a language as Greek, imperceptibly prevailing over these small particular tongues.

Du Perron: *That the vernacular of Egypt was not the language of the Greeks and of the Empire appears from what St. Jerome testifies — that St. Anthony wrote his Epistle* [seven Epistles] *in the Egyptian language.*

Reply: No one is unaware that there was an Egyptian language different from Greek in the time of the Fathers, since they themselves testify that Scripture had been translated into that language. But on the one hand, we have proved in chapter VIII that in the Thebaid, where this Egyptian language, otherwise called Coptic, had been most preserved, divine service was performed in that language, as it still is. And on the other hand, one cannot doubt that Greek had become the vernacular of Egypt properly so called since the reign of the Ptolemies — for otherwise, how would preaching have been done there in Greek? Was it only for the learned, for those employed in affairs, or for persons of elevated condition, and was the word of God not announced to the common faithful?

Du Perron: *That Greek was not the vernacular of Syria appears from Theodoret — who in the Life of Macedonius says that* Gubba *in the Syriac language signifies lake or deep pit; and that the same Macedonius, having answered a certain Captain in the Syriac language, another Captain interpreted it into Greek.*

Reply: One had no need of these particular proofs to know that there was a Syriac language in the time of the Fathers. Who has ever doubted it? But it has been shown in the preceding chapter that in Syria proper, where Syriac was less vernacular than Greek, the divine service was performed in Greek — whereas beyond the Euphrates, in Osroene and Mesopotamia, it was performed in Syriac, because everyone there understood it and not all understood Greek; the Court of the Kings of Syria, successors of Alexander, being at Antioch, capital of Syria, the Greek language must have been better established there than in distant countries.

Du Perron: *In sum, that all the provinces of the East had their own distinct languages appears from the second chapter of the Acts.*

Reply: But apart from the fact that with regard to many of these Eastern peoples, these different languages may have been no more than different dialects of Greek that were nonetheless distinguishable — just as one easily distinguishes the language of a Picard from that of a Gascon, though both speak French — when each of these peoples would have had a particular language of their own, it does not follow, as has now been said so many times, that the Cappadocians, Pontics, peoples of Asia Minor, Phrygians, Pamphylians, and Egyptians did not also have one common tongue — namely Greek, which was then so widespread that Cicero says, in his speech for the poet Archias, that what was written in Latin was read in few places, but that what was written in Greek was read in almost all the countries of the world: *Graeca leguntur in omnibus fere gentibus*. And one may further remark that the establishment of the Christian Religion — all of whose Canonical books are written in Greek — may have greatly contributed to causing this beautiful language, already established throughout the East, to prevail more and more over the old languages of each province; so that several of them had been abolished in the time between the day of Pentecost and the time of the first four Councils. And thus it is not surprising that St. Jerome should say absolutely — which destroys all this Cardinal's pretensions — that in his time the Greek language was spoken throughout the whole Eastern Church: *excepto sermone Graeco quo omnis Oriens loquitur*.

Du Perron: *As for the Western Church — that is, in almost all the Provinces of Europe and Africa — the service was performed there in the Latin tongue alone... And yet it is certain that the Latin tongue was vernacular nowhere outside Italy and the cities of the Roman Colonies scattered throughout the Empire, such as Carthage in Africa, where the Latin tongue was vernacular; which is shown by St. Augustine, who says he learned it amid the caresses of his nurses.*

Reply: It is difficult to comprehend how so able a man could have taken for certainly true what is certainly false. For unless he took all the cities of the West for Roman Colonies, how could he have imagined that outside Italy there was no city besides these Colonies in which Latin was the vernacular? This may have been the case in the early times of Roman dominion, at least for the West. For in the East, the beauty of the Greek language already established there since the dominion of the Greeks was doubtless what prevented Latin from becoming as common there as it did in the West; whereas in the West, as I have said, it was principally through the Colonies that Latin spread throughout the provinces, gradually becoming dominant. But one cannot doubt that this had already come about by the time of the Fathers, and that Latin had by then become the vernacular and common language, at least in all the cities of Spain, Africa, the Gauls, and the other Provinces of the Western Empire.

What St. Augustine says — that he had learned Latin amid the caresses of his nurses — is proof of this; and one cannot conceive how Cardinal du Perron could have thought himself to have answered it by saying that Carthage was a Roman Colony — as if St. Augustine had been born in Carthage, or as if that were a sound inference: *Carthage, where he was not born, was a Roman Colony; therefore Thagaste, where he was born, must also have been.*

Having advanced this general proposition — that Latin was the vernacular only of Italy and the Roman Colonies — he undertakes to prove it with regard to the Gauls, Germany, Illyricum, and Africa. I shall answer each in turn.

Du Perron on the Gauls: *For the Gauls had their own vernacular and maternal language, distinct from the Roman, which was the language of the Empire — a language that only the learned, those employed in affairs, or persons of elevated condition knew, as is seen from the fact that Marseille was called* τρίγλωττος, *the city of three tongues; and from the fact that St. Jerome, in his fourth letter, particularly commends the elegance and polish of the Gallic language.*

Reply: From the fact that Marseille was called the city of three tongues, it follows that one and the same city can have three vernacular languages — that is, that three languages can be learned there by use alone and commonly understood and spoken there. One must further remark that it is from Varro that St. Jerome reports that those of Marseille were called trilinguals, because Greek, Latin, and Gaulish were spoken there. But so much time had passed between Varro and the first four Councils that this old Gaulish may well have been little in use by then. It would therefore have been more to the point to cite Suetonius, who says that Antonius Primus, one of the principal captains of Vespasian, who was a Gaul, was called in his language *Beco* — which means, he says, *rostrum galli* (a cock's beak) — suggesting that instead of *Beco* one ought to read *Bec-coq*. And Ulpian (*Fideicom.*, Dig. de Legatis 3), who says that a fideicommis may be made not only in Latin and Greek but also in Punic and Gaulish. But all of this matters nothing. For what needed to be proved is that in the time of the Fathers Latin was in the Gauls only the language of persons of quality — which has no plausibility whatsoever, it being certain on the contrary that it was then incomparably more common than old Gaulish, and that it was at least the vernacular of all the cities, where it cannot be shown that preaching was ever done in any other language than Latin in the time of the first four Councils.

An admirable proof of this is found in what Sulpicius Severus reports of the election of St. Martin to the Bishopric of Tours (Life, Book I, chapter 7). He says that St. Martin, having been carried off from his monastery by a ruse and brought to Tours, an incredible multitude of people who had come from the surrounding villages demanded him as Bishop, against the opinion of certain Prelates — principally the Bishop of Angers, named Defensor. As they were assembled for this purpose in the Church and the Reader could not enter for the crowd, one of the company opened the Psalter and read the first verse that presented itself: *Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem propter inimicos tuos, ut destruas inimicum et defensorem — "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise because of thine enemies, that thou mightest destroy the enemy and the avenger."* Whereupon the people raised a great shout, persuaded that God had arranged for this passage to be read in order to confound this Bishop named *Defensor*, who had declared against St. Martin. Would this have happened if these people — many of whom had come from the surrounding villages

— had not understood Latin? They understood it therefore in common, and consequently Latin was their vernacular language, even if there may have been some among them who still spoke old Gaulish.

And far from the passage of St. Jerome's fourth letter cited by this Cardinal proving the contrary, it rather confirms what I say. For what this Father calls *ubertatem Gallici nitoremque sermonis* was not, as he claims, the elegance and polish of the Gaulish language, but the abundant and flowery style of the Gallic Orators in Latin — which was then their vernacular — compared with the style of the Roman Orators of that time, which in his judgment was graver and more chastened. St. Jerome's own words make this clear: *"I hear that your mother is a pious widow of many years, who nursed and educated you as a child; and that after studies in the Gauls — which are most flourishing — she sent you to Rome at no small expense, sustaining your absence with the hope of what you would become; so that Roman gravity might season the abundance and polish of Gallic speech — as we read of the most distinguished men of Greece, who dried up Asiatic bombast with Attic salt and repressed the luxuriance of the vine with pruning hooks, so that the wines of eloquence might overflow not with a foliage of words but with the expression of thought as it were of grapes."* This double comparison — of Asiatic Orators with Attic, and of Gallic with Roman — makes it sufficiently clear that he is in both cases comparing Orators of the same language. And without this, one does not see how rhetorical studies done in the Gauls, if they had been done in the Gaulish language, could have been a good preparation for similar studies at Rome. It was therefore only with regard to Latin eloquence that St. Jerome said that studies were then most flourishing in the Gauls — and Cardinal du Perron ought to have learned this from the Prologue to his second book of Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians, which he cites in the same place; for after calling St. Hilary, who was, he says, a Gaul born at Poitiers, *latina eloquentiae Rhodanus* — a Rhône of Latin eloquence — he says that the Gauls abounded in Orators, which he claims ought not to be attributed so much to the natural genius of the nation as to the continual exercises of the rhetoricians. But what would so great a number of Orators have done in the Gaulish language, since at the very least this Cardinal agrees that everything relating to justice, public affairs, and still more the Church was conducted only in Latin? One must therefore acknowledge that *Gallicus sermo* in that passage of St. Jerome signifies the Latin of the Gallic Orators, and not a Gaulish language different from Latin, as this learned Cardinal falsely imagined.

Du Perron on the Franks: *And since the language of the Franks, wholly different from Gaulish, succeeded in its place, no change was made in the Latin language for Church services.*

Reply: The language of the Franks does not enter into the period in question — which is that of the first four Councils. For those peoples were pagan before Clovis, who was not baptized until considerably after the Council of Chalcedon. And yet it is certain that those who embraced Christianity soon changed their language for the one they found in the Gauls, which

was Latin, as appears plainly enough from the History of Gregory of Tours. And when it is said of St. Cloud, in the new Breviary of Paris, that having devoted himself to the service of God on leaving childhood, he applied himself to the reading of the Sacred Books (*Sacrorum librorum lectioni sacrisque orationibus intentus*) — is one to imagine either that they were translated into the language of the Franks, or that he had needed to learn Latin by study in order to understand them? Nothing is therefore more out of place than to cite the language of the Franks, who made themselves masters of the Gauls, as if it had prevented Latin from remaining their vernacular.

Du Perron on Germany: *And that in Germany likewise the Latin tongue was the language of the Empire and of the Church, but not the vernacular of the people, appears from what St. Jerome writes on the questions of Sunnia and Fretela, that the barbarous tongue of the Goths sought out the Hebrew truth.*

Reply: Since the greater part of ancient Germany was not yet subject to the Roman Empire, whether or not Latin was the vernacular of the country from which Sunnia and Fretela wrote to St. Jerome, one can draw no certain conclusion from this for the question at issue — which is whether throughout the whole Western Empire there was nowhere outside Italy and the Roman Colonies where Latin was the vernacular of the people. And I do not even know how one can affirm that the Latin tongue was the language of the Empire and the Church in those parts. For who can guess which part of Germany St. Jerome had in mind by this land of the Goths — given that Bellarmine himself believes St. Jerome understood the Goths by this word?

In any case there is every reason to think that these words *barbara Getarum lingua* do not designate a particular speech of the Goths, but that *lingua* is taken there for the tongue with which one speaks — as when the Prophet says *lingua mea calamus scribae* (my tongue is the pen of a ready writer) — so that it is as if someone, speaking of the Iroquois converted to the faith, were to say, without attending to their language and even if they spoke French: *the barbarous tongue of the Iroquois proclaims the praises of Jesus Christ.* And indeed, taking *lingua* as *tongue* in the speaking sense, what would St. Jerome mean — that it is astonishing that the tongue of the Goths should seek out the Hebrew truth? This would have been appropriate had Sunnia and Fretela put their difficulties to him in the Gothic tongue; but having put them in Latin, they gave him no occasion to speak of the speech of those peoples, whatever it may be. And this is not in fact what he does; rather he takes occasion from the ardour these pious women showed in seeking to learn the true sense of Scripture to give thanks to God that a nation regarded as barbarous was beginning to devote itself to the study of Holy Letters. And the sequel shows that this is assuredly all he intended: *"We see truly accomplished in our day that word of an Apostle and a Prophet: Their voice has resounded throughout the earth, and their word has made itself heard to the ends of the world. Who would have believed that the barbarous tongue of the Goths would have sought out the Hebrew truth, and that, while the Greeks slumber or rather quarrel with those who labour*

on the Holy Scriptures, Germany studies them with care? Truly I see that God has no regard for the various conditions of persons, but that in every nation, he who fears Him and whose works are just is acceptable to Him. Hands hardened to holding sword hilts, and fingers that seemed fit only for drawing bows, are accustoming themselves to use pens and styluses; and lion hearts that breathed nothing but war become lambs in clothing themselves with Christian gentleness."

Du Perron on Illyricum: *And that even in the province of St. Jerome, which was Illyricum, the Latin tongue was not the vernacular of the country, appears from what he says on the Epistle to the Galatians, that in his language, Galatia means* translation.

Reply: St. Jerome says nothing of the kind — neither in his Preface to the second book of his Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians (which is the passage to which the margin of the *Reply* refers), nor in the Preface to the first book, nor in that of the third. It is evident enough in any case, from what has been said so many times, that this would not prove that Latin was not at that time the vernacular of Illyricum. And can one doubt that it was, since St. Jerome always speaks of Latin as his own language and regards it as his mother tongue, distinguishing it from those he learned by study? We have already seen that, in his letter to Sophronius, speaking of his translation of the Septuagint into Latin, he says he had given long ago to the men of his language the translation of the Septuagint, most carefully corrected: *Quorum translationem diligentissimè emendatam olim meae linguae hominibus dederim.* And in his Preface on Joshua, speaking of his translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew, he says he offers what he can to the men of his language: *pro virili portione offerre linguae meae hominibus.* But what he says in the Preface to the third book of his Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians is still more considerable. For, having complained there that the study of Hebrew had caused him to write less elegantly in Latin — *Omnem sermonis elegantiam et latini eloquii venustatem stridor lectionis hebraicae sordidavit* — he adds: *"I leave to the judgment of others whether the indefatigable labour I have employed in learning Hebrew has greatly advanced me in the understanding of that language; but I know well what I have lost in my own: Quid autem profecerim ex linguae illius infatigabili studio aliorum judicio derelinquo, ego quid in mea amiserim scio."* And in the Preface to the first book of the same Commentaries, comparing Latin Authors with Greek, he calls the former *linguae nostrae scriptores* — the writers of our language. Is this not again distinguishing the Latin tongue from those he had learned by study, such as Greek? And thus can one doubt that he regarded the former as his mother tongue and that of Illyricum — whether or not there remained in that country some remnant of another ancient language?

Du Perron on Africa: *And as for Africa — that the Latin tongue was not vernacular among the people, though it was the language of the Empire and of letters and of affairs — but that there was in addition a vernacular language for the people, appears from St. Augustine, etc.*

Reply: I have already answered this. I have only to add that this Cardinal, having committed himself to proving one thing, proves not it but something very different. For here are his words: *"And that the greater part of the simple people* (remark these words) *and of the peasants and rustics of Africa did not understand the Latin tongue, it appears, etc."* There is a great difference between the greater part of the simple people of Africa and the peasants and rustics of Africa, since the inhabitants of the cities are the greater part of a country's inhabitants, and of ten parts of the inhabitants of the cities, nine are what one calls the simple people. To satisfy what he promises, the facts he reports must therefore prove not merely that the peasants and rustics of Africa did not understand Latin, but that the greater part of the simple people of the cities did not understand it either. Let us see whether this is so.

He cites only two facts. The first: *"that Valerius, predecessor of St. Augustine, having overheard two African peasants conversing and one of them pronouncing the word* Salus, *asked one of the two who knew both languages what the word* Salus *meant, and that he replied it meant* three." It is clear enough that this fact concerns only peasants, and does not even prove that all of them were ignorant of Latin — since of two, there was one who knew it.

The other fact is that *St. Augustine, contesting with Crispinus, Donatist Bishop of Calama, who had bought a village where some eighty peasants dwelt, in order to draw them out of the diocese of Hippo and so have greater means of converting them to the Donatist heresy, said that Crispinus and he must plead their cause in Latin before those of the village, and then that their pleading should be interpreted into African, so that the villagers might judge which of the two they wished to follow*. The margin of the *Reply* cites the second book Against the Letters of Petilian, chapter 83, where these peasants rebaptised by Crispinus are mentioned; but nothing is said there of the proposal St. Augustine had made to plead before them. It is in letter 173 that this is found, and where one sees also that these peasants were not of free condition, but were those called *Servi glebae* — those who were purchased in purchasing the estate — which is why St. Augustine says Crispinus had bought these peasants to rebaptise them. And thus it was not a question of knowing which of the two they wished to follow — for St. Augustine did not deny that they ought to regard Crispinus as their master — but only whether they wished to belong, for spiritual matters, to the Catholic communion or to that of the Donatists. Be this as it may, this second fact also concerns only peasants, and even those of a servile condition. And moreover, far from serving to prove that the greater part of the simple people of the cities did not understand Latin, it proves the opposite. For it is impossible that, if the greater part of the simple people of a city understood and spoke only one language, persons of quality should not know that language, though they might also know another — since persons of quality and the simple people of the same city cannot help having commerce with one another, and this can only be done through a common language spoken and understood on both sides. Now St. Augustine and Crispinus did not know how to speak Punic — for if they had, they would have pleaded their cause in that language without needing an interpreter. One cannot therefore reasonably suppose that it was the only language spoken

and understood by the greater part of the simple people of the cities of which they were Bishops. This is demonstrative; but here are two further positive proofs.

The first is what St. Augustine says in the first book of the *Retractations*, chapter 20, on the alphabetical Psalm he had composed against the Donatists: *"In the design I had of making the cause of the Donatists known to the most lowly among the simple people, to those altogether ignorant and devoid of learning — and of ensuring even that they could not forget it — I composed a Psalm or Canticle, all of whose sections began with the letters of the Latin alphabet, such as those called alphabetical, so that by singing it, it might impress itself the better on their memory."* Can anything be desired more directly against what this learned Cardinal says of the whole West — that Latin was the language of justice, of affairs, of letters, learned and understood by all persons of elevated condition; but was therefore not familiar to persons of low and rustic condition, who had only their own vernacular and maternal tongue — and in particular of Africa, that the Latin tongue was not vernacular to the people? For if the Latin tongue had not been the vernacular of the most lowly people and the most ignorant, would St. Augustine, in desiring that the cause of the Donatists should come to the knowledge of the last of the people — *humillimi vulgi atque omnino imperitorum atque idiotarum* — have found it a good invention for this purpose to have them sing a Psalm in Latin — that is, in a language they would not have understood?

The second proof against this Cardinal's false imagination is what the same Saint says in his Sermon 24 on the words of the Apostle. For wishing to cite a Punic proverb, he says he will report it in Latin and not in Punic, because not all of them understood the Punic language: *Latine vobis dicam, quia punice non omnes nostis.* He therefore supposes that not all who were listening to him knew Punic, but that they all knew Latin — which he could not have said if the greater part of the simple people did not understand Latin, as this Cardinal supposes. For who can doubt that the simple people formed the greater part of the audience of this Saint?

One may add to this that St. Augustine, in the letter to Pope St. Celestine which is now number 209, makes it clear enough that Priests who knew the Punic language were not easily found. For rendering account to this Pope of the new Bishop he had thought fit to establish at Fussala — which was not a city but only a *castellum* (a large village), on which depended several villages — he says he had sought a Priest who knew Punic: *Aptum loco illi congruumque requirebam qui et Punica lingua esset instructus* — which sufficiently shows that at that time it was not a common thing to understand this language; and that consequently it is not Punic, but Latin, that ought to be regarded as having been the vernacular language of that part of Africa subject to the Romans.

But this gives me occasion to remark that there is certainly a textual error in the same Saint's letter to the Bishop Novatus (believed to be the Bishop of Thesse, who attended the Conference of Carthage), now letter 84. St. Augustine excuses himself for not returning to him his brother Lucillus — whom he calls *filium meum diaconum Lucillum, germanum tuum* —

without marking of which Church he was Deacon. For it appears from these words near the end of the letter — *sic enim regionum nostrarum ardentissima siti diaconum Lucillum tu potius concessisti* — that it was Novatus who had sent him to St. Augustine. The reason this Father gives for his refusal is: *sed cum latina lingua cujus inopia in nostris regionibus evangelica dispensatio multum laborat, illic autem ejusdem linguae usus omnino sit — since the Latin tongue is scarce in our regions, making the dispensation of the Gospel laborious, whereas there it is in full use.* There is certainly a textual error in those first words *sed cum latina lingua*, this noun having nothing to which it relates; and the margin reads, *fortè legendum: sed cum calleat latinam linguam.* But I believe one ought to read *sed cum punica lingua sit instructus* — as in the letter to St. Celestine — or rather: *sed cum punicae linguae inopia in nostris regionibus evangelica dispensatio multum laboret.* For whatever correction one makes to this passage, it appears impossible that what is said there can be understood of the Latin language. To read it as it stands would be to make St. Augustine say that the knowledge of the Latin language was rare in his Diocese, and that he was so eagerly seeking Ecclesiastics who could speak it that, this Deacon knowing it, he could not resolve to send him back to his brother to serve in a Diocese where there were far more people who knew Latin. Yet this is what St. Augustine would be saying if one reads *latina lingua* — which one sees plainly is ridiculous and untenable. For if the knowledge of the Latin tongue were rare at Hippo among the Ecclesiastics, why does he, in the second book of *On Christian Doctrine* — written at least for all the Ecclesiastics of Africa and principally for those of his Diocese — not say that many of them need to learn Latin in order to understand Scripture perfectly, but, supposing they all know it as their mother tongue, counsel them only to learn Greek and Hebrew? *Latina quidem linguae homines quos instruendos suscipimus duabus aliis ad Scripturarum cognitionem habent opus, hebraica scilicet et graeca.* Reading *punica* instead, there is no longer any difficulty; and this will teach us only two things: first, that there were few Ecclesiastics at Hippo who knew Punic, though it was needed for instructing the peasants who knew no other language; and second, that it was more common in the diocese of Novatus, where there were many more Ecclesiastics who knew it. The reason for this difference is easy to guess: the Latin language having begun to establish itself in Africa through the most considerable cities, and above all the maritime ones such as Hippo, the use of the old language of the country had sooner been abolished there and remained only in the villages; whereas Thesse, being further from the sea and from commerce, Latin having established itself there later, the ancient tongue had also been better preserved.

I have concealed none of the proofs of Cardinal du Perron — which are almost the same as Bellarmine's, save for some he added. And so I think that after this no one will doubt that they were wrong to maintain that in the time of the first four Councils (for it is not a question of what was done after that time) Scripture was read, and divine service celebrated in Greek in the Eastern Church, in many places and provinces where Greek was not the vernacular of the people; and that in like manner in the Western Church, Scripture was read and the service celebrated in Latin in many places where Latin was also not the vernacular.

But I believe it right to say, in closing this Chapter, that although I find no solidity in what these two Cardinals have taught on the subject we have just treated, these are not the kind of things I call extravagant and impious paradoxes in M. Mallet's book. It is the abuse he makes of certain hypotheses that I maintain are ill-founded, and the consequences he draws from them, that I contend are altogether contrary to common sense and highly prejudicial to Religion.

Chapter XI Examination of the Eighth Proof: That the Gospel of St. Matthew Was Composed in Hebrew, Which Was at That Time the Vernacular Language of No Country

It is agreed that the most probable opinion is that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew — for those who hold a different view, says Grotius, *reject without any just cause the very great consensus of pious antiquity on this point*.

But it in no way follows from this that he wrote in a language that was not the vernacular of the country where this Apostle was writing. And it is far more likely, says the same Grotius, that he wrote his Gospel history in the language then in use in Judaea, where all the ancients say he remained for some years after Our Lord's Ascension: *Quare credi par est scriptam ab eo evangelicam historiam eo sermone qui ea in regione frequentabatur*. For since the word "Hebrew" was equivocal in that period, as we have already shown from several passages of the Gospels and Acts, and was then ordinarily taken to mean the Syriac language which had succeeded Hebrew and retained many of its words, nothing is more ridiculous than M. Mallet's confidence — who, having for himself only this equivocal and ambiguous word, dares to propose as a certain truth, and as a fact admitting no dispute, that the Gospel of St. Matthew was written in the ancient Hebrew tongue, no longer spoken in Judaea.

He ought at least not to have concealed that the ablest men of recent centuries maintain as indubitable the opinion he rejects so disdainfully — while he proves his own only through continual falsehoods and displays of ignorance. Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie, most skilled in the Oriental languages and the chief labourer on Plantin's Royal Bible, does not doubt that it was in Syriac that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel. We have just seen that this is also Grotius's view. Albert Widmanstadius, Chancellor to the Emperor Ferdinand, confirmed this same opinion with very effective arguments, says Bellarmine (*De Verbo Dei*, Book II, chapter 4). And this Cardinal declares that this is also his own thought: *"It is very probable,"* he says, *"that the Gospel of St. Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews were written in Syriac. And this is not contrary to what the ancients say — St. Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, St. Athanasius, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome — that the Gospel of St. Matthew was written in Hebrew. For they mean by the word Hebrew that Hebrew tongue which was vernacular in the time of the Apostles — just as we often see it noted in the Gospel that something was said in Hebrew, when it was said in the vernacular of that time, that is, in Syriac."* M. Mallet ought at least to have read this passage in Bellarmine — he who appears to know of this matter only what he has read in that Author, and who takes over even his errors, as we shall see below.

But beyond the authority of these learned men, it is easy to show that Eusebius and St. Jerome — who most often said that St. Matthew had written in Hebrew — meant thereby the vernacular Hebrew, that is, Syriac.

One cannot doubt this with regard to Eusebius, if one considers carefully what he says gave St. Matthew occasion to write his Gospel, in the third book of his History, chapter 18: *St.*

Matthew, he says, *having preached the word of God to the Hebrews* (this is what the Jews who spoke vernacular Hebrew were called, to distinguish them from those who spoke Greek, called Hellenists, as appears from the sixth chapter of the Acts) *and being about to go and preach to distant Nations, wrote his Gospel History in the language of the country* (he does not say *in Hebrew*, but *τῇ πατρίῳ γλώττῃ* — "in the ancestral tongue" — a phrase one will never find used to signify anything but a vernacular language) *and thus perfectly supplied, by the care he took to write down what he knew of the Saviour, for what they would lack through his absence.* Does this not make clear that he wrote them their Gospel in the same language in which he had preached to them? Otherwise, would he have perfectly supplied, by a book the people could not understand, for the instructions he gave them in person, in a manner intelligible to all sorts of persons?

But this is still clearer with regard to St. Jerome, if one joins together the various places where he speaks of the Gospel of the Nazarenes. For in his Commentary on the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew, he leaves it in doubt whether the Nazarenes had preserved the original of St. Matthew's Gospel. He says there were those who believed this, and he does not refute them. And it is St. Epiphanius's opinion that they had the Gospel of St. Matthew entirely intact — that is, that they had removed nothing from it, though they had added various things they claimed to have known by tradition. Now this same St. Jerome, in his third Dialogue Against the Pelagians, says that this Gospel used by the Nazarenes — also called the Gospel According to the Hebrews, because these Nazarenes, though Christians, still kept the Law of the Hebrews — was written in the Syro-Chaldaean tongue (which was the vernacular of the Jews in the time of the Apostles) but in Hebrew characters: *In Evangelio juxta Hebraeos, quod Chaldaico quidem Syroque sermone, sed Hebraicis litteris scriptum est, quo utuntur usque hodie Nazaraei secundum Apostolos, sive ut plerique autumant, juxta Matthaeum, quod et in Caesariensi habetur Bibliotheca, narrat historia, etc.* One cannot doubt that this is the same Gospel he speaks of in his Commentary on St. Matthew. It is therefore certain that this Gospel (which M. Mallet claims to be the same as St. Matthew's) was in the vernacular language of the Hebrew Jews — even though he says, in his Commentary, that he had translated this Gospel from Hebrew into Greek. And consequently he cannot have believed that St. Matthew's Gospel was written in any other Hebrew than this vernacular Hebrew — since otherwise he could not have left it in doubt, as he does in these two places, whether it was not the very Gospel of this holy Apostle to which various things had been added, as Grotius believes with great plausibility.

It also appears that the Author of the *Opus Imperfectum* on St. Matthew never doubted that this Apostle wrote his Gospel in a language intelligible to Hebrew Christians. For the manner in which he speaks, from the very beginning of his Commentary, makes this very clear. Here, he says, is the reason commonly held for what led St. Matthew to write his Gospel: a very great persecution having arisen in Palestine, such that all the faithful feared being dispersed, they begged this Apostle to write for them the History of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, so that wherever they might be exiled, having this book with them containing the summary of

their faith, they should not lack instruction should they come to lack Teachers to instruct them. Would a book written expressly in a language not understood by the common faithful — so that they could understand nothing in it except through the mediation of Priests and Doctors (which is M. Mallet's hypothesis) — have been fit to supply for the want of Priests and Doctors, and to serve the faithful as instruction, when there was no one to instruct them?

But it is nonetheless proper to set out all of M. Mallet's reasons here, and to examine them in turn.

Here is the first. *St. Jerome understood the text of St. Matthew so well that he translated it into Greek. Now if it had been written in Syro-Chaldaean, he could not have translated it — because he knew neither Syriac nor Chaldaean, or at least knew very little of them, as appears, with regard to Chaldaean, from what he says in his Prologue on the book of Daniel — that in order to translate the Chaldaean text of that Prophet he needed the help of a man more skilled than himself in that language; and, with regard to Syriac, because Gennadius shows evidently, at the beginning of his Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers, that he did not know it at all. It is therefore certain that the original text of this Gospel was not Syro-Chaldaean, but true and ancient Hebrew.*

One does not know what to think of M. Mallet when one hears him speak in this manner — whether he invents the falsehoods he advances of his own accord, according to what he believes it would be good for things to be, or whether he writes from the notes of men even bolder than himself. But what is certain is that the argument he makes here is a rare example both of his ignorance and of his lack of respect for the Fathers.

For it is not true that St. Jerome translated the text of St. Matthew into Greek. Why would he have done so? Did the Church not have the same veneration for the ancient Greek version of this Gospel that she would have had for the original? Would he have wished her to abandon it in favour of his own? This is to attribute to him a strange notion. But he had no thought of any such thing — for the Gospel he translated from Hebrew into Greek is that of the Nazarenes, or, as he calls it elsewhere, *According to the Hebrews*. This appears from the very passages to which M. Mallet refers us: *De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, and chapter 12 of the Commentary on Matthew — so true is it that he cites them on someone else's word, without having read them. St. Jerome says, in the latter, as we have just seen: *In Evangelio quo utuntur Nazaraei et Ebionitae, quod nuper in Graecum de Hebraeo sermone transtulimus, etc.* And in the former, speaking of St. James the brother of the Lord: *Evangelium quod appellatur secundum Hebraeos, et a me nuper in Latinum Graecumque sermonem translatum est, etc.* And speaking of St. Ignatius's Epistle: *"concerning the Gospel which I have recently translated, he cites testimony about the person of Christ, saying… And when he came to Peter and those who were with Peter, he said to them: Behold, touch me and see, for I am not a bodiless demon; and immediately they touched him and believed"* — which M. Mallet will certainly not find in St. Matthew. This is also why Eusebius says he does not know whence this holy Martyr took this testimony.

It is not true that St. Jerome could not have translated the text of St. Matthew had it been Syro-Chaldaean. M. Mallet is not unaware of that scholastic saying: *a facto ad posse valet consequentia* — from the fact one may validly infer the possibility. Now this Father did translate a Gospel which he himself says was written *Chaldaico Syroque sermone, sed Hebraicis litteris.*

It is not true that St. Jerome did not know Syriac or Chaldaean, or knew very little of them. It is groundless to give the lie to the Church, which says of him, in the lessons of his feast, that he was consulted from all quarters on the difficulties of Scripture, *propter ejus singularem doctrinam, et linguae non solum latinae et graecae, sed hebraicae etiam et chaldaicae intelligentiam.*

It is not true that he acknowledges his lack of skill in the Chaldaean language in his Prologue on Daniel, nor that he said that in order to translate the Chaldaean text of that Prophet he had needed the help of a man more skilled than himself in that language. For here is all he says on this in that Prologue: *"Being still very young,"* he says, *"adolescentulus, after having filled my mind with the pleasant reading of Quintilian and Cicero, I set myself to study the Chaldaean language with incredible labour, as if I had been condemned to turn the mill. And as I could scarcely, with much time and sweat, pronounce from the depths of my throat such harsh words, being still hardly advanced in it, I set myself to read Daniel; but I found there such difficulty that I thought to abandon it altogether. Nevertheless, a certain Jew gave me courage, telling me often in his language that assiduous and stubborn labour brings all things to completion — I, who already passed for a Doctor among the Hebrews, resolved to be a disciple among the Chaldaeans. But to tell the truth, all I have been able to achieve to this hour is that I read it well and understand it well, but still have great difficulty pronouncing it. I tell you all this to make you understand how difficult Daniel is."*

There is no likelihood that M. Mallet has read this passage — for it would take the very height of impudence to dare say, after having read it, that St. Jerome acknowledges there that he did not know Chaldaean, and that he needed another's help to translate Daniel.

One sees, moreover, the exact contrary from his Preface on the book of Judith. For he declares that he found it written in the Chaldaean language, and that it was from this Chaldaean original that he translated it into Latin, without indicating in any way that he needed help to make this translation. It is therefore quite false that St. Jerome did not know Chaldaean — though it is true that he did not know it as well as Hebrew, as appears from another passage which M. Mallet should rather have cited, had he known of it.

He is no more accurate when he says that Gennadius showed evidently, at the beginning of his Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers, that St. Jerome did not know Syriac. For Gennadius does not say absolutely that St. Jerome never knew the Syriac language, but only that he did not know it in 392, when he was writing his catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers: *Unde constat*, he says, *eum illo tempore ignorasse Syram linguam vel litteras.* Now it was after that time that

he translated the Gospel in question. Moreover, it is Gennadius who is evidently mistaken, far from having evidently shown that St. Jerome did not know Syriac even at that time. For on the one hand, nothing is less evident than the proof he offers — namely, that he had forgotten to include St. James of Nisibis in his Catalogue, for which he imagines there could be no other cause than that the works of this Saint, being found only in Syriac, St. Jerome did not then know that language — as if Athenagoras were not likewise omitted from this same Catalogue, though one cannot say this is because St. Jerome did not know Greek, in which this Christian Philosopher wrote. And on the other hand, Gennadius's vain conjecture (who elsewhere shows much venom against St. Jerome, as well as against St. Augustine and St. Prosper) is evidently destroyed by that Saint's book entitled *Nominum Hebraicorum*, which he mentions when speaking of himself at the end of this Catalogue — since one sees in that book a great knowledge of Syriac as well as of Hebrew.

Finally, what is most marvellous is that M. Mallet could not even draw, from all his false hypotheses, the conclusion he draws from them. For since St. Jerome, ignorant as he claims him to have been of Chaldaean, was nonetheless able to translate Daniel with another's help — why, with the same help, could he not have translated the Gospel of St. Matthew, even had it been written in Syro-Chaldaean?

M. Mallet's second reason is taken from a passage of St. Athanasius, *in Synopsi*, which he has not understood — for it teaches us nothing else, according to Bellarmine (*De Verbo Dei*, Book II, chapter 9), except that this Father believed St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, to be the author of the Greek translation of St. Matthew's Gospel: *Porro*, he says, *Athanasius in Synopsi existimat ab Apostolo Jacobo Matthaei Evangelium in Graecam linguam esse translatum* — which is nonetheless very uncertain, for St. Jerome says the author is unknown.

It is much the same equivocation that deceived him with regard to Papias, who likewise meant nothing else than that this Gospel of St. Matthew had been translated into Greek as best one could — or else that those who, like Papias, did not dwell in Judaea, understood it as best they could.

But his fourth reason shows what an excellent critic he is — for he proves that the Gospel of St. Matthew was not in Syro-Chaldaean because the one Sebastian Münster published in the last century under this Apostle's name is written in Hebrew — as if (says Grotius, who apparently understood this matter better than M. Mallet) it were not so certain that Münster's Gospel is not that of St. Matthew, that no arguments are needed to prove it: *Illud quidem Hebraicum Evangelium quod a Tilio, et alterum quod a Munstero est editum, non esse Matthaei adeo certum est ut nullis indigeat argumentis.*

One sees from all this whether M. Mallet is right to say that it must be taken as constant that St. Matthew did not write in the vernacular language of the Hebrews.

Chapter XII Examination of the Ninth Proof: That St. Bartholomew and St. Barnabas Carried the Gospel of St. Matthew with Them as a Proof of the Truths They Were Preaching, But Not as a Deposit to Be Entrusted to the People, and That They Did Not Judge It Fitting to Have It Translated into Any Vernacular Language

M. Mallet, having undertaken to establish at any cost the second head of his new heresy — that the intention of Jesus Christ and the Apostles was that the common body of Christians should not read the Scriptures of the New Testament — believed he had found a proof of it in what the ancients say: that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. But although he does not carry his views very far, he judged rightly enough that, for this to serve his design, it would not suffice merely to show that the Hebrew in which St. Matthew wrote his Gospel was not the vernacular of the Jews of that time — as he had tried to do, by several reasons each as poor as the last. He needed further to show that the Apostles' intention was that this Gospel should remain in that language, and that it should not be translated into another which, being vernacular, would render useless the design he supposes St. Matthew to have had — of taking away knowledge of it from the people by writing it in a language understood by no people on earth, but only by a few learned men. For who does not see that if it had been translated, immediately after its appearance, into a language that was the most vernacular and most easily understood in various countries of all the languages in the world, and if this translation had been approved by the whole Church, it would have become just as popular and just as exposed to being read by the ignorant as if it had been written first in that language?

Yet this is no mere supposition — it is an actual truth; it is what indubitably happened to the Gospel of St. Matthew. It is not even so certain that it was first composed in Hebrew — though this is the most probable opinion — as it is certain that the Greek version we have of it was spread, from the very beginning of the Church, throughout all Christian nations; and there are even reasons to believe that St. Mark, who closely followed St. Matthew's Gospel, had seen the Greek version of it, and not only the original, before composing his own. However this may be, no one has ever doubted that this Greek version had apostolic authority — which is why some Fathers have attributed it to St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, others to St. John the Evangelist, and those who, like St. Jerome, say its author is uncertain (which is more probable), have nonetheless recognized it as a piece as holy and as canonical as the three other Gospels, written originally in Greek. For one need not doubt that when St. Jerome says he corrected the Latin edition of the New Testament according to the Greek truth, the Greek authority, he meant thereby the Greek of St. Matthew's Gospel as well as that of all the other books of the New Covenant. It follows from this that even had St. Matthew's Gospel been written in a language known to only ten persons, the Greek translation — approved by the whole Church, which appeared soon after, even during the Apostles' own lifetime — rendered it just as popular, and just as capable of being read by a multitude of ignorant persons, as if it had been written first in Greek. Now it would be an impiety to say that this translation was made against the Apostles' intention, and that it spread so thoroughly everywhere that, the original

no longer being found, it alone has remained. It is therefore also an impiety to attribute to the Apostles the design M. Mallet attributes to them: of preventing, as much as they could, the Sacred Books from being read by the people.

None of this, however, stops him. His argument, drawn from St. Matthew's Gospel, must stand at all costs. For this, it is necessary that the Apostles' intention was that no translation of it should be made into any vernacular language. However evidently false this may be, M. Mallet will undertake to persuade us of it rather than abandon an argument that seemed to him so good. Here, then, is how he proceeds.

We have read what Baronius reports from Eusebius, Book V, chapter 10 — that Pantaenus, having gone to the Indies, found there the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew, which St. Bartholomew had brought there. And what the same Baronius says under the year 485 — that the body of St. Barnabas was found on the Island of Cyprus, having upon his breast the Gospel of St. Matthew written in his own hand. And upon this he does two things.

The first is that he supposes this Gospel of St. Matthew, found in St. Barnabas's tomb, was the Hebrew original — of which he has no proof whatsoever. And it is far more likely that it was only the Greek translation of this Gospel. For it is said by the author of the history of the discovery of this Apostle's body (in Surius, June 11) that the Emperor Zeno desired to have this book, had it very richly bound, and that every year on the Thursday of Easter week it was used to read the Gospel in the Emperor's Chapel. Now one cannot doubt that it was in Greek that the Gospel was read in that Chapel; and if it had been in Hebrew that it was read that day, the author of the account would not have failed to remark upon it as an extraordinary thing. This Gospel, found in St. Barnabas's tomb, must therefore have been the Greek translation, and not the Hebrew original.

The second is that he found it convenient to conflate these two stories — of St. Bartholomew and St. Barnabas — and to make them entirely alike, by supposing that this Hebrew Gospel had been found in the tombs of both these Apostles alike. And from this he draws everything he needs to make his argument conclusive. For he wishes, on page 164, that these two illustrious Apostles, going to preach the faith to the Gentiles, had carried with them the Gospel of St. Matthew as a pledge and proof of the truths they announced, and not as a deposit that ought to be entrusted to the people and placed in their hands; that it was for this reason they did not believe it fitting to make any translation of it into any language of the infidel nations they had converted; and that they did not wish to part with it, having had it enclosed in their tomb as a mark of the veneration they held for the true word of God, which was in its purity and had suffered no change through the translations of men. *Here,* he concludes, *are illustrious examples which wonderfully support the Church's wise conduct, and which soundly refute the unjust pretensions of our adversaries.*

One sees clearly enough the falsehoods of this account — since the Gospel of St. Matthew was found in the tomb of only one of these Apostles, and was found there in Greek, not in Hebrew.

But this is not what I wish to dwell upon. Is it possible that a Christian, a Catholic, a Priest, should not see the horrible consequences of this discourse? For if what he says were true, it would follow that these two Apostles, acting by the Spirit of God, held thoughts entirely opposed to those held by the whole Church, acting by that same Spirit. These two Apostles having judged, according to M. Mallet, that it was not fitting for St. Matthew's Gospel to be translated into any language of the infidel nations they had converted to the faith — that is, at least with regard to St. Barnabas, that it should not be translated into Greek (for Greek was the vernacular of all the infidel nations to whose conversion this Apostle laboured) — while the whole Church, on the contrary, judged it so fitting that it should be translated into Greek, that some ancients, as I have already said, attributed the version to St. James, and others to St. John, and everyone agrees that, whoever its author, it has always held the same authority as the original. Is this not an impiety, to set two Apostles thus against the Church — or rather, to set the Church against herself — since what he falsely attributes to these two Apostles justifies, as he claims, the Church's conduct, which he would have us believe to be so hostile to translations that it is not for want of his effort that we should not think the translation of St. Matthew's Hebrew into Greek was contrary to her spirit?

But he goes further still. For since we no longer have St. Matthew's original, it would follow, according to the principles he lays down and attributes to these two Apostles, that the one we now have would be of far lesser authority — since he praises them for having had enclosed in their tombs the one written in Hebrew, as a mark of the veneration they held for the true word of God, which was in its purity and had suffered no change through the translations of men. Now the Church no longer has St. Matthew's Gospel in that state; she has it only as translated by men. She could therefore no longer make us respect it as the true word of God which was in its purity — since M. Mallet supposes that two Apostles believed that, for it to be regarded in this manner, it had to be exactly as it came from this Evangelist's hands, and had to have suffered no change through the translations of men.

One does not expect M. Mallet to receive in this world the punishment such great excesses deserve; but there is good reason to fear he will not find the same impunity at the judgment of God. This is what ought to touch all who have even the slightest Religion. For how can one view with indifference what we see today — the worst things permitted to certain persons, and the best things taken as occasion to persecute good people?

Chapter XIII Examination of the Tenth and Eleventh Proofs: That St. Mark, Having Composed His Gospel at the Request of the Romans, Did Not Write It in Latin but in Greek, and That St. Paul Did the Same in Writing to Them

M. Mallet saw clearly enough that, to conclude anything by this argument, he needed to suppose or prove that Greek was a language the Romans did not understand. And this is indeed what he advances at the outset as an indubitable thing, on page 169: *"It is very certain,"* he says, *"that the Romans, in the time of the Apostles, did not know foreign languages, and particularly Greek, and that they even made it a point of honour to remain ignorant of them, believing themselves too elevated above the nations subject to their Empire to trouble themselves much with learning their manners of speech."* Having tried to prove this with ridiculous arguments, he concludes proudly that it is evident that in St. Paul's time the Romans did not understand Greek. And accordingly, he says, one must acknowledge that the Apostle did not believe he ought to write to them in their vernacular tongue, though he could have done so, having the gift of tongues, and that it was more fitting that this people should not understand what he sent them except through the ministry of Doctors and Interpreters. And he divines that it is perhaps also because of the truths of grace — of which it is expedient that the people should hear speak only from the mouths of Priests — that this Epistle, in which they are taught, was written only in a foreign language which the Romans did not understand.

One must acknowledge that M. Mallet is the foremost man in the world for advancing the most manifest falsehoods with the same confidence with which one might propose the most certain truths — so much so that those unacquainted with the matters of which he speaks would need only take the exact opposite of what he says, and this would almost always be a sure means of arriving at the truth. This is certainly what must be done in this instance — as one of the ablest Interpreters of Scripture of recent centuries has also done, for matters of erudition depending on the knowledge of profane and sacred History. One may judge from this that it is Grotius of whom I wish to speak. He proposes, at the beginning of his Commentary on St. Mark, these same two questions as M. Mallet: whence comes it that St. Mark, who composed his Gospel for the Romans and at their request, and St. Paul, who addresses to them a long letter, both wrote to them in Greek and not in Latin? And the reason he gives is entirely contrary to this Doctor's — because he took care to know what is unknown to no man of letters in the world, save M. Mallet alone. *It is,* he says, *that the greater part of the Jews who were at Rome did not know Latin, but knew Greek, from having dwelt for a long time in Greece and Asia, and that there was scarcely a single Roman who did not understand it. Graece scripsit Marcus, quamquam in gratiam praecipue Romanorum, sicut et Paulus ad Romanos graeca scripsit lingua, quia Judaei qui Romae agebant plerique latini sermonis ignari longa per Asiam et Graeciam habitatione graecam linguam didicerant, et Romanorum vix quisquam erat non graece intelligens.*

Here is more than enough to refute M. Mallet's fancy. But it is nonetheless proper to examine the whole sequence of his reasoning.

1°. *It is certain,* he says, *that the Romans, in the time of the Apostles, did not know foreign languages, and particularly Greek.*

This *particularly* is admirable — for it is exactly the contrary: the Romans, of all foreign languages, knowing only Greek at that time — but knowing it so commonly that it was even taught to parrots: *Quis expedivit Psittaco suum χαῖρε* ("Who taught the parrot to say his 'greetings'?").

2°. *They even made it a point of honour to remain ignorant of it.*

Reply: This is so false that Cato the Censor, at a time when the sciences were not yet so fashionable at Rome, made it a point of honour to learn Greek in his old age — he who was so devoted to upholding Roman greatness.

3°. *They believed themselves too elevated above the nations subject to their Empire to trouble themselves with learning their manners of speech.*

Reply: This shows no knowledge of the Romans at all. It is to take them for Goths, Vandals, or Huns. They had too much wit to despise a nation that had produced so many great men, and not to esteem a language which alone gave them entry to all the sciences and all the fine arts. M. Mallet is therefore the only one who does not know that conquered Greece held her conquerors in awe:

Graecia victa ferum victorem cepit, et artes Intulit agresti Latio.

(Conquered Greece took captive her savage conqueror, and brought the arts to rustic Latium.)

They considered themselves barbarians in comparison with the Greeks — Plautus says *Marcus vortit barbare* ("translated into barbarian," i.e., into Latin) to indicate that he had translated a Greek comedy into Latin. It was from Greece that they drew their laws, their Theology, and their Morals; and above all in the period in question, to refuse the trouble of learning Greek was to resign oneself to passing for ignorant.

Up to this point M. Mallet has spoken from his own head. He next brings forward passages all taken from Baronius, under the year 16, section 7. But since these are apparently notes some careless assistant gave him, some of them are entirely contrary to what Baronius says, and there is not a single one among them that does not prove the exact opposite of what he claims.

4°. *Suetonius says, in the Life of Octavius, chapter 89, that the Emperor Tiberius made a law forbidding Greeks to speak at Rome in any tongue but Latin.*

Reply: Such a law would have been ridiculous and senseless. But the manner in which this is cited shows plainly enough that it is a fabrication. For why would Suetonius, in the Life of Octavian, report a law of Tiberius? Whence then comes this blunder of M. Mallet's? It is that Baronius, at the year 16, section 7 — from which M. Mallet's note-taker drew these passages — had attributed to Tiberius what this Cardinal says of Augustus, because he had begun that section with these words: *Sed antequam ad Tiberium Octaviani Augusti successorem convertamus stylum, etc.* And what he says of Augustus is that, shortly before his death, he distributed robes and cloaks to various people of his Court, some Greeks and others Romans, on condition that the Greeks should dress in the Roman manner and speak Latin, and the Romans should dress in the Greek manner and speak Greek. From this playful jest of Augustus, M. Mallet makes a law of Tiberius; and from what proves that at Augustus's Court people spoke Greek and Latin indifferently, he makes a proof that the Greek language was not commonly understood by the Romans. This is what M. Mallet's approvers took for a most learned and curious observation!

5°. *Suetonius also says, in the Life of Tiberius, chapter 71, that this Prince had such contempt for Greek that he apologized to the Senate for having used, in addressing them, the word "monopoly," and, in an edict, the word "emblem."*

Reply: This proves well enough that Tiberius made a point of not mixing Greek words into his Latin speech before the Senate, or in public acts. But it proves nothing whatsoever, either that he did not know Greek, or that he held Greek in great contempt. Suetonius does not say a single word of such contempt; and it is a falsehood on M. Mallet's part to attribute to him this ridiculous notion. *Sermone Graeco*, says this Author, *quamquam alias promptus et facilis, non tamen usquequaque usus est, abstinuitque maximè in Senatu* — that is: "Although otherwise ready and fluent in the Greek tongue, he did not use it on every occasion, and abstained from it especially in the Senate" — after which he reports the two examples M. Mallet cites so inappropriately. For had it not been common at Rome, not merely to understand Greek but to speak it, Suetonius would not have thought to remark, as something peculiar to Tiberius, his affectation of not ordinarily speaking it, although he knew it very well.

6°. *Another Historian relates that the Emperor Claudius deposed a judge of very illustrious birth, and reduced him to the rank of foreigners, because he spoke Greek.*

Reply: M. Mallet cites for this Dio, Book 57; whereas what he reports, following Baronius, is from Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, chapter 16 — but he misrepresents Suetonius. For here is what Baronius actually reports: *Splendidum virum, Graeciaeque provinciae principem, verùm latini sermonis ignarum, non modò albo judicum erasit, sed etiam in peregrinitatem redegit* — "A distinguished man, the foremost citizen of a province of Greece, but ignorant of the Latin tongue, he not only struck from the roll of judges, but even reduced to the status of a foreigner." It was therefore not because he spoke Greek, but because he did not know Latin — two very different things. For who can doubt that a man who did not understand Flemish, and knew only French, would be judged unfit to serve as a Councillor at Brussels? Yet it would be

ridiculous to try to prove from this that the French language is disdained at Brussels, that it is considered improper to speak it there, and that it is not commonly understood there. One cannot, therefore, conclude from this action of the Emperor Claudius what Baronius concludes from it (year 45, section 40) — that this Prince not only forbade the Romans to speak Greek, but even punished those who spoke it. Nothing is more false than this — this Greek having been deprived of Roman citizenship only because he did not know Latin, in which there was nothing but reason. For however great the esteem the Romans held for the Greek language, and however commonly it was understood at Rome, they also wished to uphold their own; which is why they found it difficult to tolerate that foreigners, to whom they granted the favour of Roman citizenship, should not understand the language of Rome. And this is one of the means, as Lipsius has remarked in his Dialogue *De recta pronunciatione linguae Latinae*, by which the Latin language spread through so many countries.

7°. *Lucullus, according to Cicero (Ad Atticum, Book I, Letter 16), affected to mix barbarous and improper words into his discourses, so as not to pass for a man who knew Greek perfectly.*

Reply: Is it to despise a language, to choose it for writing what one has done that is greatest and most worthy of being known to posterity? This is what we learn from this very passage of Cicero — that Lucullus had done this, as had Cicero himself, who had written the memoirs of his Consulship in Greek. For here is what he says in letter 16 (or 18, according to others) of Book I of his Letters to Atticus: *"I have sent you the memoirs of my Consulship, which I composed in Greek. If you find things in them not sufficiently pure and exact, in the judgment of so refined an Atticist as yourself, I shall not repeat to you what I recall Lucullus once told you concerning his history — that he had deliberately left in it, in various places, solecisms and barbarisms, so that no one might doubt it was the work of a Roman. For as for myself, I confess that if such faults are found in mine, it will be quite against my will and intention."* Was there ever a clearer proof of how highly the Romans esteemed the Greek language, since they preferred it to their own for immortalizing their name and preserving the memory of their fine deeds? But M. Mallet did not have sufficient intelligence to grasp Lucullus's witticism — who, fearing there might be things in his history not sufficiently pure in the Greek tongue, said pleasantly that he had left them there on purpose, so that no one should doubt it had been written by a Roman.

8°. *The Romans had such veneration for the Latin language that, fearing to violate its majesty, they did not permit the Greeks to explain themselves in their own tongue, but obliged them to speak through Interpreters.*

Reply: If the Romans had not commonly understood Greek, it would have been from necessity, and not merely to preserve the majesty of their Empire and uphold the Latin tongue, that they would have obliged Greeks who did not know Latin to speak to them through interpreters in public affairs. Now Valerius Maximus has taken care to inform us that they did this only for these two reasons, and not because they could not have done otherwise

had they wished. *Nec illis*, he says, *deerant studia doctrinae, sed nulla non in re pallium togae subjici arbitrabantur* — "Not that they lacked learning, but they judged that in no matter should the Greek cloak be set above the Roman toga." But he adds in the following section that even this no longer held in the time of Tiberius — which was the time of the Apostles — and that the Senate's ears were by then deafened with long Greek harangues. *Quis ergo*, he says, *consuetudini qua nunc Graecis actionibus aures curiae exsurdantur januam patefecit?* ("Who then opened the door to the custom by which the Senate's ears are now deafened by Greek speeches?") And he says it was Molon, Cicero's teacher of Rhetoric, who was the first Greek to be heard in the Senate without an interpreter.

These are all the passages by which M. Mallet claimed to prove that in the time of St. Mark and St. Paul the Romans did not understand Greek, and that it was even displeasing to them to be spoken to in that language. They are all taken, as I have already said, from Baronius (year 45, section 40) — that the use of the Greek language had become disreputable at Rome, through the affectation of courtesans who spoke Greek; which he claims to prove by these verses of Juvenal:

"For what is more repellent than a woman who thinks herself beautiful only if turned from a Tuscan into a little Greek girl, a pure Cecropian from Sulmona — everything in Greek, though it is more shameful for our women not to know Latin? In this tongue they express their fears, their anger, their joys, their cares — in this they pour out all the secrets of their souls."

But it is not true that Juvenal says this of courtesans. He says it of ordinary married women of Rome, as appears from the verse immediately preceding these: *"Certain small faults, yet not to be tolerated by husbands."* And it could not be otherwise — for his design in this sixth Satire is to dissuade a friend from marrying, by gathering together all the causes of disgust then found in marriage. Now he does not suppose that his friend wished to marry a courtesan, which passed for shameful even among the pagans themselves. The use of the Greek language must therefore have been very common at Rome, since those who wished to marry had difficulty finding a wife who did not affect to speak Greek.

Thus, even were one to add this proof of Baronius's to the others M. Mallet has taken from him without naming him, one sees plainly enough that not a single one of them fails to prove the exact opposite of what he concludes from them (p. 172) with inconceivable boldness: *that what he has said shows evidently that in the time of the Apostle St. Paul the Romans did not understand Greek, and that it is for this reason St. Paul wished to write to them in this language, so that the people should understand what he sent them only through the ministry of Doctors and Interpreters.*

But nothing is better suited to confound this prodigious rashness than the very Author from whom he took all the passages he alleges in its support. For Baronius employs them to prove that St. Mark, who wrote his Gospel for the Romans, ought to have written it in Latin rather

than in Greek — because, having a mind formed like every other man's, except this new Doctor's, he reasons thus: Greek was scarcely understood by the Romans at that time (this is his hypothesis, poorly proved by the passages he cites, as we have shown). Now St. Mark, writing his Gospel for the Romans, ought not to have written it in a language they did not commonly understand. Therefore it is more likely he wrote it in Latin than in Greek. This inference is sound, supposing the hypothesis were true — that few people understood Greek at Rome. Yet M. Mallet, who believes this hypothesis true, and who claims to have proven it well by these same passages of Baronius, concludes from it the exact opposite; and here is how he reasons, on the very same supposition: Greek was not commonly understood at Rome. Now it was the intention of the canonical Writers that the people should not understand what they wrote (this is his foolish pretension). It was therefore fitting that St. Mark, writing his Gospel for the Romans, should not have written it in Latin, which they understood, but in Greek, which they did not understand.

Is it possible that a book filled with such extravagances should have found approvers?

Chapter XIV Examination of the Twelfth Proof: That St. Paul Wrote in Greek to the Galatians, and Not in Old Gaulish, Which Was Their Vernacular Language — Which Shows That His Intention Was That His Letter Should Be Understood by the People Only Through the Ministry of the Priests and Doctors

Everything he says on the subject of the Epistle to the Galatians is taken from a passage of St. Jerome which Cardinals Bellarmine and du Perron misunderstood, as I showed in chapter 9 — and which M. Mallet has not failed to report just as badly, following them, drawing from it (something they took care not to do) an extravagant conclusion. St. Jerome assures us, he says, that the first language of this Province was Greek; but that the Gauls entirely changed it, so that the people of that country came to speak a tongue rather similar to that then in use in the city of Trier. Now if St. Paul had wished to write to them in their vernacular language, he ought to have written to them in old Gaulish. This, however, adds M. Mallet, is not what he did — for he wrote to them in Greek; which shows that the Apostle's design was not that his letter should be understood by the people except through the ministry of Priests and Doctors.

This is his perpetual daydream, supported only by a false reading of the passage — which does indeed say these peoples had a particular language similar to that of the country of Trier, but which at the same time assures us (which overturns M. Mallet's ridiculous consequences) that besides this language, they also spoke Greek, which was common to all the peoples of the East. For here are St. Jerome's own words: *Unum est quod inferimus, Galatas excepto sermone graeco quo omnis Oriens loquitur propriam linguam, eamdem penè habere quam Treviros.* It is therefore not true that St. Jerome says Greek was not the vernacular of the Galatians; he says only that they had another language besides it — just as in Africa, in St. Augustine's time, besides the Latin language which was vernacular throughout all the countries of Africa subject to the Roman Empire, the Punic language had still been preserved in the villages. And there is likewise every appearance that it was only in the villages of Galatia that this old Gaulish was spoken. But whatever the case, whether or not it was spoken in the cities, it is certain that Greek was also spoken there — the language common to all the East, as St. Jerome expressly says; which is confirmed further by that celebrated saying of Cicero, in his speech for the poet Archias, which we have already cited: that what was written in Greek was read in almost all the countries of the world, whereas Latin was confined within very narrow limits: *Graeca leguntur in omnibus fere gentibus, Latina suis finibus, exiguis sane continentur.*

And this is the true reason — not the chimerical one M. Mallet offers — why the Apostles chose this language rather than Roman, or other tongues particular to certain countries: because, writing for the whole Church, which was already beginning to spread throughout the known world, nothing was more advantageous to the establishment of the Christian Religion than to write its sacred Books in the most widespread language, one spoken and understood among the greatest number of nations — leaving to those who would succeed them the task of

making translations for peoples who would need them, as indeed came about in the course of time.

But it is worth considering further the absurdities into which M. Mallet falls in seeking frivolous reasons to impute to St. Paul the belief that it was not fitting for the people to understand what he wrote. For if it was for this reason that he did not write to the Galatians in old Gaulish, nor to the Romans in Latin, but to both in Greek — which he is pleased to suppose these peoples did not understand — then this Apostle ought also, by the same reasoning, to have written to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians not in Greek, which was certainly the vernacular of all these peoples, but in Syriac or Latin, so that they should understand what he wrote them only through the ministry of Priests and Doctors, as he claims of the Romans and Galatians. And according to him, St. Paul ought rather to have observed this conduct toward the Corinthians than toward the Romans. For instead, he says on page 136, whereas he had told the Corinthians they were still too weak to understand what he had to teach them, he changes his tone considerably when writing to the Romans, whose faith was known throughout the world. Having congratulated them that their faith was proclaimed throughout the earth, he then expresses a great desire to go and see them, so as to bring them from the knowledge of the first elements of Religion to the knowledge of other, more sublime truths.

Quid fuit unquam tam discors sibi? ("What was ever so at odds with itself?") One of this Doctor's principal reasons for forbidding the people the reading of the Sacred Books is that they ought to be read only by those more advanced and more capable of being nourished with solid food, and not by children still in need of milk. Now, according to this same Doctor, St. Paul regarded the Corinthians as children still needing milk, and the Romans as more advanced in the spiritual age of grace — and yet he would have it that the Apostle treated the Romans less favourably than the Corinthians, having written to the former in a language he claims they did not understand, so that they could grasp nothing of what he sent them except through the ministry of Doctors and Interpreters, while having written to the latter in their vernacular tongue, which they could all understand, down to the women and children, without need of either Doctors or Interpreters.

Quo teneam vultus mutantem Protea nodo? ("By what knot can I hold this Proteus who changes his face at every turn?")

Chapter XV Examination of the Thirteenth Proof: That the Epistle to the Hebrews, Whether Written in Greek or in Hebrew, Was Not Written in a Language the Jews Understood

One grows weary of always having to refute the same inanities of M. Mallet. This is why, as he pays Estius the compliment of having very solidly proven that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written in Greek, I shall content myself likewise with showing, in few words, that this same learned Theologian proves very well that, whether it was written in Hebrew or in Greek, it was written in a language that those to whom it was addressed could understand very easily.

For as to those who believe it was written in Hebrew, Estius maintains that this opinion can have no plausibility except by taking the word "Hebrew" for the vernacular language of the Jews of that time. All that Galenus reports in favour of this opinion, he says, proves only that what some ancients said — that this Epistle had been written in Hebrew — must be understood not of the language of the ancient Prophets, but of the Syriac in use in the time of the Apostles. There are others of the same opinion as he. But all they say shows only that, even supposing it certain that this Epistle was written in Hebrew, this ought to be understood of Syriac, the language St. Paul and all the rest of the Hebrew Jews then used. For what reason would there be for this Apostle, writing to the Jews, to choose a language which, though sacred, was no longer in use among writers, rather than preferring to use the one which all the people of that country used, so as to be more easily and more promptly understood? *Ac non potiùs eâ mallet uti quâ passim omnes illius gentis homines loquendo scribendoque utebantur, quo nimirum facilius promptiusque intelligeretur*. This, he adds, is therefore all that the arguments of these Theologians can prove — and the same must be said concerning the Gospel of St. Matthew.

This is how one reasoned up until the year 1679, when suddenly there arose a new Author who, having a mind formed differently from all other men, far from believing it a reason to write in a language that one will thereby be more easily understood, claims that the Canonical Writers always intended to prefer the language in which they would be less easily understood — as if their aim had been to write in cipher. Molinism must be very proud indeed to have produced a man who thus reforms the common sense of all other men. But leaving this visionary aside, let us see what Estius will tell us concerning the second opinion — that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written in Greek — and whether he will think to give as the reason for this that, this language not being understood by the Jews, it suited St. Paul's supposed intention that what he wrote should not be comprehended by the people except through the ministry of Priests and Doctors.

The strongest reason given, he says, *for saying that this Epistle was written in Hebrew is that it was written by a Hebrew to Hebrews. But this inference is very weak. For then that of St. James, the two of St. Peter, and the second book of Maccabees would also have to have been written in Hebrew, since they were written by Hebrews. But the use of the Greek*

language having spread very far, even into Syria, since the Greeks had made themselves masters of it, so that not only the Jews dispersed among the gentile peoples, but even those who dwelt in Syria, had gradually grown accustomed to speaking Greek, the Apostles judged it fitting to use this language in their Epistles, so as to be more easily understood by everyone, rather than the one only Hebrews or Syrians would have understood. And it was for this same reason that St. Paul, writing to the Romans, did not write to them in Latin but in Greek — for it is well established that the Greek language was very common at Rome.
This is what Estius believes on the matter, and what everyone believed until M. Mallet.

Chapter XVI Examination of the Three Last Proofs: That the Epistle of St. James and the Two of St. Peter Were Written to the Jews Dispersed Outside Judaea, and the First of St. John to the Parthians — None of Whom Understood Greek

M. Mallet continues always to act upon his false suppositions — that the Greek language was not understood by the Jews dispersed outside Judaea, to whom these three Apostles wrote in Greek. For although it is the opinion of the ancients that St. John's Epistle was written to the Parthians, one must not imagine this was addressed indiscriminately to all the peoples of that Empire; it was only to the Jews dispersed in those countries, which was called the Dispersion of Babylon. Now since the Empire of the Greeks had extended even further, there is no doubt that the Greek language remained very common there, the Parthians not having made themselves masters of it until about 150 years before Jesus Christ. And we have proof of this in Plutarch — for he testifies, in the Life of Crassus, that Hyrodes, King of the Parthians, knew Greek. And as for those dispersed in the Roman Empire, to whom St. James and St. Peter wrote, it is still more indubitable that they all spoke Greek, and read the Bible only in Greek in their Synagogues — as appears from Philo, a Jew who, being from Alexandria, knew only Greek and not Hebrew, though it appears well enough from his works that he had read Scripture extensively.

I have reserved until now the remarking of a particular absurdity found in M. Mallet's system, if one considers the state of the Church as it was in the time of the Apostles, at the birth of Christianity. He would have it, for example, that the Apostles wrote their Epistles expressly in a language not understood by the people of the Churches to which they were addressed, so that the people could grasp nothing of them except through the ministry of Priests and Doctors. In the idea we presently have of the Church, this does not appear so strange, because one can understand by these "Priests and Doctors" the whole Clergy — and since this today comprises a great number of persons, one imagines there were also many persons who had full liberty to read these Apostolic Letters. But if one represents things as they truly were — if one considers that there were as yet only the three higher Orders: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, all the other Orders, according to the most learned Theologians, having been instituted afterwards — if one adds to this that in these early times (as M. Mallet, in his *Examen*, page 370, acknowledges after Estius) there were many Churches where the Bishop performed all the functions of Priest as well, with a single Deacon — and that thus all the rest of the faithful were merely simple Laypeople, to whom this Doctor claims that, following the Apostles' intention, one ought not to leave the liberty either to read or to have in their possession the Sacred Books — what would follow from this, except that these Apostolic Writings would have been in the hands of very few persons, and that few persons would have known what they contained? This would extremely diminish their authority in the minds of those who, not yet being Christians, would not regard them as Sacred Books, but whom one would wish to persuade that they at least deserve as much credence as a well-authenticated history. For this first degree of authority — which is a step toward passing to the second — is

founded principally on the fact that they were composed from the very beginning of the Church, and spread at once into so many hands, that it is morally impossible they could have been falsified. And this is how St. Augustine proves, against the Manichaeans, that there was no plausibility in what they said — that the Epistles of St. Paul had been altered by half-Christians and half-Jews who had inserted into them everything found there favourable to the old Law — because it would have been impossible for these same alterations to be found in so many copies, which were spread everywhere.

But this impossibility no longer appears if one changes the hypothesis, adopting M. Mallet's instead: that of two or three persons in each Church who were masters of these copies, who did not let the people transcribe them, and told them only what they pleased. For then St. Augustine's argument against the Manichaeans — and all similar arguments one might make to persuade unbelievers one wished to convert that we still possess the true writings of the Apostles — would be incomparably weaker, and these writings far more exposed to suspicion of alteration. So true is it that a spirit of error reigns throughout this first part of M. Mallet's new book — which tends not merely to establish a particular heresy, but to disarm Religion of its most solid proofs.

Chapter XVII Examination of What M. Mallet Says Concerning the Ancient Latin Translation

It is a rather surprising thing that M. Mallet has ended the second head of his new heresy — which concerns the books of the New Testament — in the same manner he ended the first, which concerns those of the Old. For if he was blind enough on that first point to close it with an Ordinance of the Jews, which stated that, allowing even children to read the whole Bible, only three or four passages were reserved for a more mature age — which visibly ruins everything he claimed to have established — he is no less so here, in concluding all the proofs he has brought forward to show that the Apostles' intention was that the people should not read the books of the New Testament, by the observation he makes on page 183: that all these books having been written in Hebrew or Greek, a Latin translation of them was made from the very beginning of Christianity. Nothing more is needed to overturn all his false conjectures. For if this Latin Translator was a contemporary of the Apostles, or lived shortly after them, as he says — at a time when their intention could not have been unknown — would the Apostles themselves, or their Disciples who had inherited their spirit, have allowed him to do something directly contrary to the design the Apostles had had, according to M. Mallet, in composing the Holy Scriptures?

Let us stop at St. Paul and St. Mark; the matter will be clearer. M. Mallet assures us that the one, composing his Gospel for the Romans, and the other, writing to them, did not wish to write in Latin but in Greek, so that what they wrote could not be known to the people except through the ministry of Priests and Doctors. This is the thesis he maintains; this is what he undertakes to establish. Now the one who translated this Gospel and this Epistle placed them just as fully within reach of being understood by all those for whom Latin was the vernacular language, as if they had originally been in Latin. He could not, therefore, have made this version except by going against the intention M. Mallet attributes to St. Mark and St. Paul; and the Church could not have approved it without approving something she would have known to be manifestly opposed to the design of these Canonical Writers.

It seems M. Mallet foresaw this difficulty, and wished to answer it in two ways. The first is that the Holy Scriptures had to be translated into Latin because it is one of the three languages consecrated by the title of the cross. But this reason ought all the more to have led St. Mark and St. Paul to write to the Romans in their own language, so that there might be Canonical Scriptures written originally in all three of these languages consecrated by the title of the cross. And if this reason yielded to the one M. Mallet claims they had for not writing in Latin — namely, that they did not wish the Christian people of Rome to understand what they wrote them except through the ministry of Priests and Doctors — why would this same reason, were it as real as it is chimerical, not have prevented this Translator, contemporary with the Apostles, from doing, by his Latin translation, exactly what St. Mark and St. Paul had wished to avoid, if we are to believe M. Mallet — namely, that what each had written for the Romans should be read and understood by all the people, without the ministry of Priests and Doctors?

He will doubtless need, to extricate himself from this awkward position, to have recourse to his second evasion, and borrow the words of his President Lizet (for it is here, on page 184, that he reports the discourse we have already discussed) to persuade us that the Latin of the Latin translation of Scripture was not the vernacular language of the Romans of that time — because the common people (according to this M. Lizet, so learned, according to M. Mallet, in the science of antiquity) already spoke a language very different from that of the learned.

We have already seen elsewhere the poor reasons on which this paradox rests — one which M. Mallet, however advantageous it would be to him, has not dared to maintain entirely. For, having reported this discourse of M. Lizet in Latin and in French, he does not know what judgment to make of it, so afraid is he that its absurdity will be shown to him. But whatever the case, he says on page 185, and without approving or disapproving this historical claim, which I leave to the reader to examine, it remains constant that it was not the intention of the sacred Writers, in composing their books in a language that was perhaps vernacular in some countries, to give them to the people to read.

This "perhaps" is quite convenient — as if there were anything more certain than what he wishes to cast in doubt: that the Canonical Writers of the New Testament wrote in a language commonly understood by those for whom they were writing. But further — how is it "constant," notwithstanding this, that their intention was not that the people should read what they wrote? One must have a strange rashness to advance as constant facts such great falsehoods — or rather heresies so expressly condemned by the word of God. For is it necessary to remind him yet again of that thunderbolt of St. Paul against this impious paradox: *Adjuro vos per Dominum ut legatur haec Epistola omnibus sanctis fratribus* — "I adjure you by the Lord that this Epistle be read to all the holy brethren"? Is this to have the intention that what he wrote should not be given to the people to read?

It is therefore a formal heresy that M. Mallet advances, and one he proves only by taking his own visions and daydreams for truths. For, he says, if they had wished the people to read what they wrote, they ought to have chosen the languages of the peoples to whom they wrote. Now, he adds, this is precisely what they did not do. And he imagines one ought to be persuaded of this, because he takes the crudest ignorance and the most ridiculous fables for solid reasons, as we have shown. Yet he triumphs, and applauds himself, in concluding this matter of the books of the New Testament. This is what we shall see in the following chapter, which will be the last of this second Book.

Chapter XVIII Examination of M. Mallet's Conclusion Regarding the Books of the New Testament

What is advantageous in this conclusion of M. Mallet's is that he uses no disguise in it. He resumes there his extravagant and impious paradox: that it was not the intention of the Canonical Writers that the common body of Christians should gain knowledge of the truths of Religion through their own reading of Holy Scripture. And being marvellously satisfied with the advantages he believes he has won over his adversaries, he insults them with two passages from Gratian, and believes that, to close their mouths, he need only address to them these words from a false Decretal of St. Fabian: *"The Apostles did not do, and did not command us to do, what you ask of us."* This is the substance of this audacious conclusion. But it deserves to be considered in more detail.

It is easy, he says, *to conclude from the observations we have just made, that it was not the intention of the Apostles that the common people should gain knowledge of the truths of Religion through their own reading of Holy Scripture, since it must remain constant that they did not speak the language of the peoples to whom they wrote.*

Reply: Erase, then, wretch that you are — to give any semblance of colour to this heretical pretension — these words from St. Paul's first Epistle to the faithful of Thessalonica, which we have already cited: *"I adjure you, by the Lord, to have this letter read to all the holy brethren."* And to make your proof stand, tell us what language was spoken at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Philippi, at Colossae, at Thessalonica, and in the seven cities of Asia Minor to which St. John addresses his Apocalypse — so that we may agree with this novel discovery: that St. Paul and St. John, writing to them in Greek, wrote to them in a language the common faithful of those Churches did not understand.

He believes, nonetheless, that he need only reap what he has sown, so pleased is he with himself. This is why, he adds, *I beg the Reader to make here a serious reflection, and to observe that the Apostles, who spoke all sorts of languages, did not nevertheless write in all sorts of languages.*

Reply: This is a fine thought indeed, and a most serious reflection — to imagine that, had the Apostles wished the Holy Scriptures to be readable by the common body of the faithful scattered throughout the earth, they ought to have written them in every sort of language. But to confound this daydream, one need only ask him why, then, did they not write them in Latin as well as in Greek — he who assures us, on page 186, that it was necessary for the Church to have Scripture in these two languages? Should he answer that they left it to God to raise up Interpreters who would render into Latin what they had written in Greek, then it is false that, in order for the Scriptures to be readable by every sort of people, they had to write them in every sort of language — since it suffices, for this purpose, that they held the same thought with regard to other languages that he is forced to admit they held with regard to Latin:

namely, to leave to the Church the task of translating these Sacred Books according to the needs of the faithful.

But M. Mallet raises on this an objection worthy of him — namely, that their disciples, who had also received this same gift of tongues, did not believe it useful to the peoples to give them these Sacred Books in their maternal languages.

Reply: They did not believe it! And why, then, did one of these disciples of the Apostles render the Gospel of St. Matthew — which had been written in Syriac, the maternal language of the Jews of Palestine — into Greek, which was the maternal language of an infinite number of peoples? And why did another disciple of the Apostles render the Greek of the New Testament into Latin, which was then another maternal language of most of the peoples of the West?

But it is precisely here, M. Mallet replies, that we are mistaken — in wishing that these two languages, Greek and Latin, were vernacular in the time of the Apostles. He has found in the Memoirs of his M. Lizet that they were then, just as they are now, only languages of the learned. This is why he ingeniously turns this argument back against us, and believes he has said something marvellous against vernacular translations, maintaining that the Apostles and their disciples must not have believed it useful to the peoples to give them these Sacred Books in their maternal languages, since they made no translation of them except into Greek and Latin, which are languages of the learned.

I would just as soon have someone say that all men must be white, since the blackness of the Ethiopians and the Moors is a true whiteness. For there is no more impudence in saying that black is white than in maintaining that Greek and Latin were not the maternal and vernacular languages of an infinite number of peoples in the early centuries of the Church, but only languages of the learned.

Yet it is upon these false and absurd suppositions that he takes occasion to deliver us this fine discourse: *Such has been the conduct of the nascent Church, which their successors observed religiously well beyond the first four centuries, during which, by the heretics' own admission, this same Church remained in her purity. It is therefore these learned Masters who have taught us what we observe; and it is these illustrious examples that we follow. After which, if our adversaries continue to reproach us for denying children knowledge of their Father's Testament, and the famished people the nourishment of the word of God, we have the right to say to them with Pope Fabian: "The Apostles did not do, and did not command us to do, what you ask of us." Or else, with St. Augustine: "We do what the Apostles taught us by their example, and what antiquity has observed."*

Reply: What can simple and ignorant persons think, reading this passage of M. Mallet's, except that these are three or four constant and indubitable truths? **1°.** That the Pastors of the nascent Church did not allow the common body of Christians to read Holy Scripture. **2°.** That

this prohibition was religiously observed well beyond the first four centuries. **3°.** That only heretics find fault with this, and that they are quite wrong, since it was the Church's practice in the very times they themselves admit she remained in her purity. **4°.** That the two passages — one from the false Decretal of Fabian, the other from St. Augustine — authorize this prohibition as an apostolic custom.

I am certain that this is indeed the impression M. Mallet's words, which we have reported, give to simple readers — that is, they cast them into ridiculous errors. For the two passages cited by Gratian speak as little of any prohibition against reading Holy Scripture as of a prohibition against reading the Qur'an; and one may be assured that in the whole work of Gratian there will not be found a single word of this supposed prohibition.

It is an impertinence to remark that, by the heretics' own admission, the Church remained in her purity during the first four centuries — as if this were a matter of some opinion peculiar to heretics.

It is an ignorance unworthy of the least schoolboy, and the Sorbonne ought to blush to see that five of her Doctors — M. Mallet, three of his friends who approved his book, and one of the Censors who reviewed it to obtain its privilege — were capable of it. It is, I say, the height of ignorance to suppose that during the first four centuries, and long after, it was considered improper for the Holy Scriptures to be read by the common body of the faithful.

Finally, it is to take all Theologians for fools or blind men, to wish to persuade them that, in order to follow the conduct of the Pastors of the nascent Church, one must forbid the reading of the Sacred Books to all who are neither Doctors nor Priests.

It appears nonetheless that he believes this in good faith, so possessed is he by his error. For far from having any fear of being mistaken, he claims there is not even room to doubt that he is right to maintain that the common body of Christians must be forbidden to read Holy Scripture, and that his adversaries are greatly mistaken in wishing them to read it. *We are too strong*, he says, *under the protection of these first founders of Christianity; and our adversaries must agree that what they demand today (that is, that pious souls console and strengthen themselves by reading the divine word, and that even children, following Timothy's example, learn there to know and serve God) is a novelty the Apostles did not judge fit to introduce.*

Let him tell us, then, how he understands these words of the great Apostle, which we have already set against him so many times: *"I adjure you, by the Lord, to have this letter read to all the holy brethren"?* Would it take more than this to open his eyes, and convict him of a gross error, when he adds that one must also agree that the prudence of the Christians of the first four centuries, and of many centuries following, did not judge it useful, for the salvation of the peoples, that they should read Holy Scripture? This is what one may call an excess of blindness and illusion. For he imagines he sees in the Fathers of the first four centuries, and of

many centuries following, what was never there — namely, prohibitions to simple believers against reading Holy Scripture — and he does not see what is found there everywhere: namely, continual exhortations to all Christians to read the Sacred Books, so as to strengthen their faith and edify their piety. But as this will be the subject of the following Book, I need say no more of it here.

Book III On the Sentiment of the Church Fathers Concerning the Reading of Holy Scripture

Chapter I On the Approvers of M. Mallet's Book: That It Is Strange They Should Have Taken for Curious Researches into Antiquity the Visions and Dreams Just Set Forth in the Two Preceding Books; But That It Is Yet Stranger That They Should Have Approved What Is About to Be Treated in This One

I cannot believe that all persons of intelligence who have read what has been said thus far concerning M. Mallet's paradoxes will not be alarmed to see that a Doctor of the Sorbonne, and Vicar General for so long a time of a great Archbishopric, could have fallen into such strange reveries, and published them with a marvellous confidence, as though they were great truths.

Yet this is not what ought to astonish us most in this encounter. It is that four other Doctors of the same Faculty — three who approved his book, and the one among the Censors who gave his note for the Privilege — were not shocked by so many flagrant extravagances, several of which are highly prejudicial to Religion, and all of which tend to establish this heretical pretension, directly contrary to St. Paul: that the Canonical Writers did not wish their Books to be read by the common body of the faithful.

Chapter II On the First Proposition of M. Mallet: That There Were No Translations of Scripture into the Vernacular in the Time of the Fathers, and That Therefore the Fathers Had No Need to Disapprove of Their Reading

One would be less surprised at this impertinence of M. Mallet's — that there were, in the early centuries, no translations of Scripture into the vernacular — were this the first time he had advanced it. But one cannot help being struck by it afresh, because he proposes it here in a manner and in terms that reveal its absurdity all the more. *Translations into the vernacular*, he says, *were unknown in their time* (he speaks of the Fathers), *and those who devoted themselves to the study of the Sacred Books read them in their sources, or else in the Greek and Latin versions, which were scarcely understood except by the learned.*

I leave M. Mallet aside. We have seen by too many examples that there is no aberration of which he is not capable. But I ask his approvers: how did so visible a falsehood escape them? Even had they not read the Fathers — which I do not wish to believe of the two elderly Professors of Theology among them — they knew at least that those of the Western Church preached in Latin, and those of the Eastern Church in Greek, except that in certain places preaching was done in Syriac. Nor could they have been ignorant that there was a Syriac version, at least of the New Testament, held to be very ancient, and that throughout the rest of the East the Bible was read in Greek, and in the West in Latin. Now one cannot doubt, as I have already remarked in the preceding Book, chapter 9, that in whatever period, the language in which the word of God was preached in each country was the maternal language of those to whom it was preached. How then did these approvers fail to see at once that it would require a total absence of sense to say, as M. Mallet does, that the Greek and Latin versions of Scripture were scarcely understood except by the learned — since this is to say what would be the most ridiculous and most injurious thing to the Church in the world: that the sermons given in Greek in the Eastern Churches, and in Latin in those of the West, were scarcely understood except by the learned, and not by the common body of the faithful.

It is less pardonable in them than in M. Mallet not to have perceived, by this means, the manifest falsity of his first proposition. For as for him, beyond his lack of judgment, he allowed himself to be carried away by the commitment into which he had entered. He needed this hypothesis to sustain his system; and had he supposed the contrary, as he ought to have done, he would have found no means of escaping this argument: the Scriptures being most certainly, in the time of the Fathers, both in the East and in the West, in languages understood by everyone, if they had found it objectionable that simple believers should read them, they would have had to make some ordinance forbidding it to them. Now it is not found that they ever made any such ordinances. It must therefore remain constant that it was free to everyone in that time to read Holy Scripture, since all could do so with as much ease as one can today in France read the New Testament of Mons, and no Decree of the Church had forbidden it to

them. But this will appear still more clearly through the examination of M. Mallet's other propositions.

Chapter III On the Second Proposition: That the Fathers Judged It Fitting to Set Limits to the Reading of the Sacred Books, So as Not to Permit It to Everyone, in Whatever Language. Examination of the First Proof, Which Is the Authority of St. Basil

I do not follow entirely the order M. Mallet has kept. For he begins with St. Jerome, and I reserve him for examination under the third proposition; because of the four or five passages he cites (his curious researches having gone no further), only that of this Father can, with any semblance of plausibility, be alleged in support of this chimerical pretension: that the Fathers regarded it as a dangerous innovation, which the Church ought not to tolerate, to let everyone read Scripture.

Let us begin, then, by examining the authority of St. Basil, and see how he employs it on page 196. *Those who cannot bear*, he says, *that the ignorant and the common people should be told they would do better to attend to their own trades than to devote themselves to the study of Holy Scripture — this reading being capable of harming them, since experience has indeed shown us that it has proven fatal to many persons — those, I say, who cannot bear this charitable counsel, complain of the Holy Fathers, who have often spoken in this manner, and among others of the great St. Basil, who made no difficulty in expressing himself clearly on such occasions. For we read in Theodoret that this holy Doctor, having heard the Emperor's chief Kitchen Officer cite a text of Scripture, was so indignant at this profanation of the word of God that, notwithstanding his usual gentleness, he could not help telling him that he ought to speak of his kitchen and how to manage it well, and not undertake, as he was doing, to treat of divine doctrines.*

Even were all this true, what could M. Mallet conclude from it — except impertinently — against the liberty that all the faithful most certainly had at that time to read Holy Scripture? For St. Basil would have been right to grow angry with an Arian kitchen officer who had misapplied, out of context, a text of Scripture in order to support his heresy against a Bishop of this Saint's reputation; and it would have been just cause for him to tell such a man to attend to his kitchen without presuming to treat of divine doctrines. Does it follow from this that he would have taken it as a profanation of the word of God had he heard it cited by a simple believer among the Catholics? As if one could not tell a craftsman who, attending Mass, committed irreverences there, that he would do better to be at his shop than to come to Church behaving in such a manner — without one being able to conclude from this that the liberty to hear Mass every day ought not to be left to everyone, including craftsmen themselves.

But matters do not stand thus at all; for there is no mention whatsoever of the citation of a passage of Scripture in this history as reported by Theodoret. And everything M. Mallet says to fit it to his design — that St. Basil, having heard the Emperor's chief Kitchen Officer cite a text of Scripture, was so indignant at this profanation of the word of God that,

notwithstanding his usual gentleness, he could not help telling him such-and-such a thing — is a pure falsehood, which M. Mallet has taken from a man more able than himself (for it appears he has read none of the passages he cites in the originals), but which is no less a falsehood for that. One need only, to be assured of it, read what Theodoret writes on the matter. St. Basil, he says, speaking of the doctrines of the faith to the Emperor Valens, great protector of the Arians, and being well heeded by him, a certain Demosthenes, chief Kitchen Officer of this Prince, rebuked in a barbarous manner this great Master of the universe. But the divine Basil, smiling, said: Here is a second Demosthenes — but less lettered than the other. This having put the man into a still greater rage, he began to use threats against the Saint. Whereupon the Saint took occasion to say to him: Attend to your sauces, and do not imagine that, having ears as impure as yours are, you are capable of understanding divine doctrines.

Can one more thoroughly disguise and falsify a History than M. Mallet has done with this one? He conceals its principal circumstances — namely, that this Emperor was an Arian, as was his kitchen officer as well, and that this Saint, explaining the faith to the Emperor, by whom he was being heeded, this Officer had the insolence to interrupt him and contradict him brutally. This is what drew from him what St. Basil said to him — whereas in the account M. Mallet gives of it, none of this appears; rather, everything turns upon a false circumstance, invented at pleasure — namely, that this kitchen officer had merely cited a passage of Scripture. And it is to this alone that he attributes St. Basil's anger, as though this Saint had believed that a man in such an occupation could neither read nor quote Scripture without profaning it. One could form no other idea of this history reading it in M. Mallet. But one could also form none more false, nor more contrary to the spirit of St. Basil — who, far from believing it a profanation of Scripture to let it be read by simple believers (which is the idea M. Mallet would have us hold of him), recommended nothing with greater care to his Monks, who were for the most part but Laymen, than the reading of the Holy Letters.

And one ought not to be surprised that he held this spirit, since it may be said to have been hereditary to him. For St. Gregory of Nyssa, his brother, relates that their pious mother did not wish to profane the eyes and heart of their sister Macrina by the reading of the pagan Poets; but that, upon her leaving childhood, she placed in her hands the Wisdom of Solomon, as a living source of holy instruction, and had her learn by heart the Psalter of David, whose chant preceded or accompanied all her actions. Yet Macrina was being raised for marriage, and one nevertheless sees that her education was entirely holy, and that the study of the Holy Letters formed the principal part of it, because it was the education of a Christian girl. Macrina afterward regulated herself upon this same model, to instruct her brother Peter, from the cradle, in the knowledge of the Scriptures, without giving him a moment's leisure for profane studies. And so this blessed child acquired all the wisdom of the holy elders from his most tender years, and distinguished himself thereafter less by the dignity of Bishop than by the lofty virtues with which he honoured the Episcopate.

This is what a certain modern Author — whom I do not wish to name to M. Mallet, to see whether he will have the boldness to take him to task — has drawn from the Life of St. Macrina, sister of these three Saints, as favouring too openly what he has undertaken to make pass for a most dangerous practice: namely, giving Holy Scripture to be read by the ignorant and the simple, without even excepting young children and young girls; whereas this Author, whom I do not presently name, approves with praise, as a most Christian conduct, that these young girls and young children should be instructed in this study of the Holy Letters by their mothers and their sisters — so true is it that one believed then, and will always believe until the end of the world, despite M. Mallet's ravings, that it is not to profane, but to honour, the Holy Scriptures, to leave them in the hands of every sort of believer without distinction of age or sex, so that their heart may be touched by them as much as their mind is enlightened.

It is therefore quite in vain that M. Mallet employs yet another passage of St. Basil, from his letter to Chilo, to support his aberrations. For this Saint, doing nothing else in this letter but marking the dispositions one must have to read the Scriptures with profit — and principally those of the Old Testament — it is just as ridiculous to infer from this that the Fathers did not think it good that everyone should be able to read them, as it would be to wish to prove today that it is not permitted to all the faithful to attend Holy Mass, because there are books that mark the dispositions one must bring to it in order to have part in that divine sacrifice.

I do not conceal that, finding myself in a place where I had no copy of St. Basil, I could only answer in this manner, though I well suspected there would be something in this Saint's letter that M. Mallet was not telling us. And indeed, having found means to obtain a St. Basil, though only in Latin, I found the following in this letter to Chilo: *Neque lectiones negligas, maximè Novi Testamenti, propterea quòd ex veteri Testamento saepe detrimentum accidat; non quòd Scripta sunt nociva, sed quòd eorum qui laeduntur mens infirma est.* Do not neglect reading, especially of the New Testament: for what is read of the Old can often bring harm, not that there is anything bad in it, but because the soul of those who are hurt by it is weak.

One cannot compare this with what M. Mallet says without blushing at his bad faith. For whereas this Saint counsels absolutely the reading of the New Testament, and finds no danger in it whatsoever, he makes him say that there is danger in reading the New Testament just as much as the Old, though there is more in reading the Old. St. Basil, he says, warns his disciple of the danger there is in devoting oneself to the reading of Scripture, principally of the Old Testament, unless one is in the necessary dispositions that this study demands. Was there ever a worse bad faith?

The matter chiefly at issue between M. Mallet and those he has taken for his adversaries concerns the reading of the New Testament, since it is on the occasion of the one from Mons that he has made all this uproar. St. Basil orders his disciple generally to read the Scriptures, but principally that of the New Testament. He gives the reason for this preference: because weak minds are sometimes hurt by certain things found in the Old. And M. Mallet so

completely overturns this Saint's thought that one can understand nothing else, from the idea he gives of it, except that St. Basil did not counsel his Disciple to read Holy Scripture at all, but only warned him of the danger there was in devoting himself to the reading of Scripture, principally of the Old Testament — so that, according to the truth, St. Basil says to him: read Scripture, and principally the New Testament; and he makes him say, according to M. Mallet: there is danger in devoting yourself to the reading of Scripture, and principally of the Old Testament. This is how he finds in the Fathers what he needs to support his pretensions — by falsifying their sentiment, and attributing to them the exact contrary of what they say.

Chapter IV Response to the Authority of St. Gregory of Nazianzus

M. Mallet must be very destitute of proofs and authorities. He speaks at first of the Holy Fathers with as much confidence as if they were all on his side. One would think he was about to allege so many that he would overwhelm his adversaries beneath their weight. But when it comes to satisfying these great expectations, of all the Fathers he has found only four in whom he could imagine there was something that might favour him — for the Author of the *Opus Imperfectum*, who would be the fifth, does not deserve to be numbered among the Fathers.

Here, then, are all the Fathers reduced to four. And of these four, we have just seen that he had recourse to two signal falsehoods in order to deceive the simple under the name of St. Basil. But what he does with regard to St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who ought to be one of the most considerable of these witnesses, marks no less the powerlessness he found himself in to discover any who would testify for him. For he could allege from him only the passage he had already reported under his twelfth proof, concerning the reading of the books of the Old Testament — citing it here anew, and with the same fraudulent reticence for which he has already been reproached in chapter 14 of the first Book, where it was shown that, far from being fit to support his pretensions, nothing is more capable of destroying them.

And indeed, must one not have a deranged mind to imagine that, having to prove this paradox — that it has always been the spirit of the Church that the common body of Christians ought not to be permitted to read the divine Scriptures — one could do so by means of what this Father reports of the custom of the Jews, who generally permitted all of that people to read, from their childhood, the books of their Religion, with the exception of four passages which they did not wish them to read except at the age of twenty-five or thirty?

But the reason he gives for this, says M. Mallet (which is that these four passages were more difficult than the rest, and could harm those who were not capable of understanding them well), still subsists today, and proves equally, for our own time as for that of the Old Testament, that this reading is not useful to everyone, and that it can bring much harm to the ignorant.

Was there ever a greater sophism than to argue from the reason for an exception to a law, in certain particular cases — which leaves the law standing in all other cases — in order to abolish that law entirely? The general law was that all Jews could read, from their childhood, the Sacred Books; the exception, that they should not read until twenty-five or thirty years of age the beginning of Genesis, the beginning and end of the Prophet Ezekiel, and the Song of Songs. The reason for this exception was the obscurity of these first three passages, and the danger that, in the Song of Songs, one might take too humanly the love of the Bridegroom and the Bride. It appears that it is upon this last point that St. Gregory of Nazianzus particularly dwelt, and to which he paid the greater regard. All that one can reasonably conclude from this, at most, is that one may still today take this precaution with regard to the Song of Songs, and not give it to be read except to those already established in piety. And this is also what St.

Jerome observed; for, prescribing to Laeta the manner in which she ought to raise her daughter, to bring her up as a true Christian, he wishes that, as soon as she begins to grow, she should occupy herself with reading Holy Scripture, and instruct herself, in the Prophets and the Apostles, in the spiritual marriage that is to unite her soul to God. *She must*, he says to this holy Mother, *give you an account every day of her reading, bringing back to you, as it were, a bouquet of flowers she has gathered with her own hand. She must know the Psalms by heart; she must draw her mind away from worldly thoughts by occupying it with these holy Canticles; she must learn to regulate her life by the Proverbs of Solomon; she must accustom herself, through meditation on Ecclesiastes, to trample underfoot all the vanities of the world; she must observe the examples of courage and patience in the book of Job; she must then pass on to the Gospels, to have them always in her hands; she must apply herself, with her whole heart, to the Acts of the Apostles and to their Epistles; she must then read the Prophets and the other books of the Old Testament. Finally, she must reserve for last the learning of the Song of Songs, so as to approach it without peril — for fear that, were she to read this holy Book in her early years, the purity of her soul might suffer some hurt and some wound, for not having understood the spiritual marriage-hymn, since it is written in words that seem to depict a human love.*

St. Jerome, who held it an honour to have been the disciple of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, certainly knew far better than M. Mallet the true sentiments of this great Bishop touching the reading of the Sacred Books; and he reports, just as this Father does, the custom of the Jews, of not reading the Song of Songs until twenty-five or thirty years of age. Whence comes it, then, that he does not draw from it, as M. Mallet does, this impious conclusion (for I know not how else to name it): that the reading of Holy Scripture (he speaks generally) is now even less useful than it was to the Jews, and that it can, more than ever, bring much harm to weak and ignorant minds? Whence comes it that this Saint judged, on the contrary, that there was no reading more useful for forming Christians in piety, from their most tender infancy — when they are most ignorant, and their minds are weakest — than the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles of the Apostles; and that he desires only that, having then read all the books of the Old Testament, one should reserve for last the Song of Songs, once their hearts are filled with the flames of celestial love?

It is that these Fathers held a principle entirely opposed to that of M. Mallet. For they believed there was no reading more fitted to maintain the faithful in piety than that of Scripture; and thus, far from forbidding it to the common body of Christians, and making them regard it as dangerous, they exhorted everyone to it, and contented themselves with marking in what order, and in what spirit, one ought to read it, so as to do so with greater profit, and to avoid that, through an ill disposition, one might find death where one ought to find life — as happens every day when one makes bad use of the holiest and most useful things.

Chapter V Response to a Passage of the Venerable Bede

It is difficult to conceive a greater boldness in attributing to Authors what they do not say than that of M. Mallet. We have already seen many examples of it; but here is one no less remarkable.

He makes the Venerable Bede say that what Our Lord did in the Synagogue of Nazareth, in closing the book of Isaiah and returning it to the Minister after having read it, was to teach us that the Book of Holy Scripture must be closed to the people; that the Priests are its guardians, and that they must open or close it according as they judge fitting; because God has left it to their prudence to declare to others the mysteries contained therein, according to the merit and capacity of their hearers.

The crux of this allegation is that Bede should have said that the book of Holy Scripture must be closed to the people, and that the Priests must close and open it for them according as they judge fitting. Now it is false that there is any of this in the passage he cites from him. Bede relates the mystery he finds in the action of Jesus Christ only as it concerns the manner in which Priests ought to conduct themselves in the preaching of the word of God, and he speaks in no way whatsoever of what has never, in all those centuries, been in question: whether it should be permitted to the people to read Holy Scripture. One would sooner have doubted whether it was permitted to them to attend the holy Mysteries — and indeed with far more reason, since there were those who could not attend them, such as the Catechumens and the Penitents, who nevertheless had full liberty to read Holy Scripture. So well-established a custom cannot, then, be shaken by this passage of Bede, which contains only the following: *He opened the book, and read in it, because, having sent the Holy Spirit, He taught all truth; but He closed it, and returned it to the Minister, because one must not say everything to everyone, and He has left it to the prudence of him who teaches, to dispense the word according to the capacity of his hearers.* This is all he reports of Bede. Has he said in any manner whatsoever what M. Mallet makes him say — that the book of Holy Scripture must be closed to the people? As for the conclusion he clearly wishes to draw from this in favour of his paradox — namely, that one must treat differently, in the distribution of the word of God, those who are differently advanced, some needing to be nourished only with milk and others with solid food — this will be found so thoroughly ruined in the sixth chapter of the preceding Book that one does not believe he will feel any further inclination to make use of it.

Chapter VI Refutation of a Passage from the Author of the Opus Imperfectum

The manner in which M. Mallet cites this Author is amusing: *St. Chrysostom, or the Author of the Opus Imperfectum.* It is as if one were to say, *St. Augustine, or Pelagius* — because there was for a long time a letter of Pelagius attributed to St. Augustine. This does not fail to deceive the simple, because, seeing in a heading the name of St. Chrysostom, they cannot imagine that anyone would have the boldness to employ his name in support of a paradox which he, of all the Fathers, has most forcefully destroyed — namely, that the Church in those centuries did not find it good that Holy Scripture should be read by the common body of the faithful; for this is precisely what M. Mallet undertakes to prove. And he dares, on this point, to name St. Chrysostom — he who, far from forbidding any of the faithful to read Holy Scripture, exhorts them all to do so, in so many places and in so pressing a manner, that M. Mallet must be utterly shameless to have wished to let it be believed that this Saint favoured his daydreams.

But it is not right that he should profit from this dissimulation. It is important that the world should know what St. Chrysostom has said, so that M. Mallet's approvers may recognize the wrong they did in not warning him that there was nothing he ought so carefully to have avoided as naming, in this dispute, a Saint who thunders in fifty places against what he claims to establish. This is what we shall show after having answered all his witnesses. But let us now see his bad faith concerning a passage from the one he calls the Author of the *Opus Imperfectum*, said to be St. Chrysostom.

The question is whether this Author believed that the common body of the faithful ought not to read Holy Scripture. Now what blindness, or what trickery, to wish to prove this by a passage in which nothing else is said except that the Doctors of the Law, whom Herod consulted, did wrong to tell this King the place where the Messiah was to be born according to the Prophets — because they ought to have foreseen that this would serve only to inflame his malice! *This teaches us*, he adds, *that the mysteries of Scripture ought not to be disclosed to the impious, but to the faithful — as St. Paul commands when he says: The things thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

But M. Mallet turns all of this to his advantage, with his customary faithlessness. He conceals that what this Author reproaches principally in the Doctors of the Law is having disclosed to Herod what he asked only so that he might rid himself of this new King whom the Magi had come to worship. He takes great care not to let this be seen; but he wishes to make it believed that what this Author chiefly blames in the Doctors of the Law is having cited Scripture, of which the pagans (this is what he attributes to him) ought to have no knowledge, and which, according to the testimony of St. Paul, ought not even to be entrusted to all Christians, but only to certain faithful persons who are capable of instructing others.

Such is M. Mallet's good faith. What this Author says generally of the faithful (*Ex quibus docemur Scripturarum occulta non manifestari iniquis, sed fidelibus* — "By which we are taught that the hidden things of the Scriptures are not to be made manifest to the wicked, but to the faithful") he restricts to a very small number of all the faithful; and from a simple proposition of St. Paul, he makes an exclusive one. For there is a great difference between saying, as this Apostle does — *keeping what you have learned from me before many witnesses, entrust it to faithful men, who are themselves capable of instructing others* — and saying that it ought not to be entrusted to others at all. Besides which, St. Paul does not speak there of Scripture at all (and thus this has no bearing on the subject at hand), but of the Tradition passed hand to hand, by which the perpetuity of the Church's faith was to be preserved throughout the whole course of the centuries. Now although this is done principally by those capable of teaching others, as St. Paul remarks in this passage, it is nonetheless certain that the truths the Apostle wished to be transmitted in this manner, from age to age, are the truths of the faith, which are hidden from no believer; and this is even what renders this Tradition more firm and more worthy of all credence — because it is not possible to alter, without its being noticed, what is recognized as a truth of the faith by several millions of witnesses.

M. Mallet has therefore found nothing in this Author's passage that favours him. But he could not read even the first lines of it without seeing himself condemned there. We have already reported them in the ninth chapter of the second Book. It is where he says that what led St. Matthew to write his Gospel was that a very great persecution having arisen in Palestine, such that all the faithful feared being dispersed, they begged this Apostle to write for them the history of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, so that, being able to have with them everywhere this book, which would contain the summary of their faith, they should not lack instruction should they come to lack Teachers to instruct them. For this is to give M. Mallet the most explicit lie — he who would have it that the Gospel and the other Canonical Scriptures were made only to be read by those who would be capable of instructing others, and not by simple believers.

Chapter VII On the Third Proposition of M. Mallet: That the Fathers Regarded It as a Dangerous Innovation, Which the Church Ought Not to Tolerate, to Let Everyone Read Scripture — Which He Proves Only by a Passage from St. Jerome, Taken in a Contrary Sense

I have already said that of all the passages M. Mallet alleges, only that of St. Jerome is one from which he could, with any semblance of plausibility, draw this conclusion: that the Fathers had opposed, as a dangerous innovation, the liberty everyone wished to take of reading Holy Scripture.

I do not trouble myself to answer the first passage of this Father, taken from his Commentary on Nahum, where he says that the reason Holy Scripture, and principally the Prophecies, have been encumbered with so many difficulties and enigmas, has been to hide the mysteries contained therein, so that what is holy should not be exposed to dogs, any more than precious stones to swine, or the Holy of Holies to the profane. For one sees clearly enough that one can conclude from this that this Saint did not wish the common body of the faithful to read Scripture, only by supposing that he took simple believers, whatever piety they had, for dogs, swine, and profane persons.

There is therefore properly only the famous passage of this Father to examine — the Achilles, so to speak, of all those who do not approve that the common body of the faithful should read Scripture.

Here, then, is this great passage, as reported by M. Mallet on page 194. *No one*, he says, *engages in any occupation, however vile, without having learned it. Farmers, masons, carpenters, goldsmiths, weavers, fullers, and generally all those who labour in trades, have themselves instructed in their crafts. There is only Holy Scripture of which everyone wishes to speak: it is not merely old women who no longer know what they are saying, and doting old men, and Sophists full of empty words, who presume to understand it well, who tear it apart, and who teach it to others before having learned it themselves.*

He draws from this passage consequences beyond measure — but none that come back round to his purpose. For what he ought to conclude from it is that St. Jerome showed thereby that it was a dangerous innovation to let everyone read Scripture — that is, women and the most ignorant, as well as the learned. Now, to be assured whether this can be drawn from this passage, one can do no better than to inquire of St. Jerome himself concerning his true sentiment on this matter. And although what he says of it is clearer than daylight, I shall gladly report it as it is found in the book of the Reverend Father Thomassin — approved by M. Mallet's own best friends, and which the Author placed under the protection of the Archbishop of Paris, because the conversations he had had with this Prelate had been for him an abundant source of light: so that, he tells him, *the effusion you then made to us upon this work has been a new bond that has made it yours, and which ought to lead you to protect it.*

Let us hear, then, what this learned man says, in his first part, Book II, chapter 10, section 6 — and let M. Mallet and his approvers judge from this whether he believed that St. Jerome and the other Fathers found it wrong that women and the ignorant, who know only the language they learned from their nurses, should read Holy Scripture.

"St. Jerome," he says, *"had no thought of permitting to Ecclesiastics any other studies than that of the Holy Letters, or of not most strictly enjoining this one upon them — since he prescribed the same rules not only to Monks and Nuns, but also to simple believers and even to Ladies. He assures us that the ordinary occupation of St. Hilarion, after prayer and psalmody, was to recite the Scriptures, which he knew by heart, with a mind raised to God: Scripturas quoque Sanctas memoriter tenens, post orationes et Psalmos, quasi Deo praesente recitabat. Instructing the holy Lady Laeta in the manner of raising her daughter as a Christian, he wishes that the first words she is taught be the names of the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the Apostles; that she be accustomed to pass from prayer to reading, and from reading to prayer; that she begin by learning the Psalter; that she then pass to the books of Solomon and of Job; then to the Gospels, which she will always have in her hands, ad Evangelia transeat, nunquam ea positura de manibus; to the Acts and the Letters of the Apostles; after which she will learn the Prophets, the Pentateuch, and the other books of Scripture, so as to kindle in her soul the pure flames of an entirely celestial love, which will render her capable of reading the Song of Songs. Finally, this holy and judicious Father wishes this young Religious to read the works of the Holy Fathers, with an assiduity that might well astonish these latter days. Cypriani opuscula semper in manu teneat. Athanasii Epistolas, et Hilarii libros inoffenso decurrat pede. Illorum tractatibus, illorum delectetur ingeniis, in quorum libris pietas fidei non vacillet. These were the same precepts he gave to the illustrious Virgin Demetrias: statue quot horis Sanctam Scripturam ediscere debeas; and to the holy Widow Furia: de Scripturis Sanctis habeto fixum versuum numerum: istud pensum Domino tuo redde. Nec ante quieti membra concedas, quam calathum pectoris tui hoc sub tegmine impleveris. Post Scripturas Sanctas Doctorum hominum tractatus lege; eorum dumtaxat, quorum fides nota est. The celebrated St. Paula had this same rule of study observed by the Nuns of her Monasteries: Nec licebat cuiquam Sororum ignorare Psalmos, et non de Scripturis Sanctis quotidie aliquid discere. In all these places, St. Jerome is no less exact in forbidding dangerous books than in ordaining the reading of those which can enlighten and strengthen Christian piety."*

As many words, so many thunderbolts, which overturn M. Mallet's false pretensions. St. Jerome, this holy and judicious Father (says this learned Author in so authoritative a Book), has not merely enjoined most strictly upon Clerics, Monks, and Nuns the reading of Holy Scripture, but has led every sort of person to this reading, without distinction of age or sex, even Ladies and young girls. Father Thomassin does not merely approve this conduct; he speaks of it with praise. He does not believe, then, any more than does the Archbishop his protector, that Scripture ought to be read only by the learned; and he believes still less that one could, with any semblance of reason, cite this great Saint in support of M. Mallet's

impious paradox: that the Canonical Writers had no intention that what they wrote by the movement of the Holy Spirit should be read by the people, but only by Priests and Doctors.

But whence comes it, then, one will say, that in the letter to St. Paulinus, whose passage M. Mallet reports, he declaims with such force against the ignorant who meddled in speaking of Scripture? Does this not prove that he found it wrong that it should be read indiscriminately by everyone? No, this proves nothing of the sort; and those who have believed it have not taken care to notice that what he condemns is not that the ignorant and women should read Scripture in order to instruct and edify themselves, but that those who are not instructed in it should meddle in speaking of it in order to instruct others — which are two things so different that common sense readily judges there is no inference to be drawn from the one to the other, and that one cannot, without bad faith, or through a dazzlement of mind that sometimes befalls even the greatest men, mistake the one for the other. One need only reread the passage to be assured of what I say, and to recognize the tricks M. Mallet uses to bend it to his design in translating it. For after having shown, by an enumeration of several trades, that one cannot be skilled in any art without having learned it, there is, he says, *only the art of the divine Scriptures that everyone claims for himself — sola Scripturarum ars est, quam sibi omnes vindicant*. This word "art" is inconvenient for M. Mallet; for it shows too clearly that what St. Jerome reproaches is not that everyone wishes to read Scripture, but that everyone wishes to play the expert in the art and science of the Scriptures. This is why M. Mallet found it advantageous to remove it in his version. *There is only Scripture*, he says, *of which everyone wishes to speak*. But even this does not suffice him: he ought to have pushed the falsehood further, and stated plainly: there is only Scripture that everyone wishes to read. That would have said something in M. Mallet's favour. But did he believe men would have so little sense as to take for the same thing, reading Scripture as a disciple, in order to be nourished by it, and speaking of it as a master, in order to make oneself esteemed? St. Jerome approved the former, and extended it even to young children scarcely out of the cradle. He complained only of the latter, as appears further from what follows, which M. Mallet has cut both from the text he reports and from his own version:

Scribimus indocti doctique poëmata passim.

For just as it is clear that Horace does not complain, by this verse, that the ignorant as well as the learned read the Poets, but that they undertake to compose poems while being incapable of it, so it is no less clear that St. Jerome applies this only to the ignorant who wish to play the expert in the science of Scripture, and not to those who read it for their own personal edification. This is what the sequel shows even better: *Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc universi praesumunt, lacerant, docent antequam discant* — "This, the chattering old woman; this, the doting old man; this, the wordy Sophist; this, everyone presumes to understand, tears it apart, and teaches it before having learned it." It is a great pity that, expressing by so many verbs what he intends to condemn — *praesumunt, lacerant, docent* — the verb *legunt* ("they read"), which would have been so

necessary for M. Mallet's design, is nowhere to be found there. It is likewise a troublesome tail-end, this ending: *docent antequam discant* — "they teach before they have learned." For this leaves no doubt as to the truth of what I have already said — that this reproach of St. Jerome does not touch the simple faithful, men or women, young or old, learned or ignorant, who seek with humility the words of life in the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles, where the Holy Spirit has preserved them, but only those who speak of them without judgment and without knowledge, and who presume to instruct others in them, never having properly learned them themselves.

The Bishop of Castorie makes the same reflection on this passage of St. Jerome, in his excellent book on the reading of Holy Scripture, final chapter. *The zeal*, he says, *that St. Jerome shows here is only against those who think themselves as learned as they are great talkers, and who have the audacity to wish to teach others what they do not know themselves. But he does not at all blame those who, recognizing their ignorance and their darkness, receive with joy the truths that are clear in the word of God, and revere with humility those that are hidden there. These persons do not have the temerity to discourse on what they do not understand, but the devotion to understand what they do not yet understand.*

Chapter VIII Passages of the Church Fathers Opposed to Those Which M. Mallet Cited with as Little Judgment as Good Faith. And First, of the Latin Fathers

We have seen all that M. Mallet has been able to find in the Fathers to justify what he had advanced with inconceivable boldness: that they were so far from indiscriminately permitting everyone the reading of Holy Scripture in the vernacular tongue, that they even disapproved of this general permission, in whatever language, as being, in their view, a dangerous innovation which the Church ought not to tolerate. Five Authors — three of whom he crudely credits with what they never said, and two from whom he could draw what he claims only by absurd and ridiculous inferences — constitute the entire proof of so general a proposition, one that will never pass, among all who have read the Fathers even a little, for anything but a signal falsehood. Yet, as if he had bewitched his approvers, and as if his book were like that potion of Circe which changed men into beasts, far from warning him of so strange a blunder, they praise him for it, and find nothing better proven than this senseless pretension — that the Fathers took particular care not to permit indiscriminately to every sort of person the reading of Holy Scripture.

This is the testimony borne by the first and most qualified of his approvers. He certifies that M. Mallet supports, in his book, in a most solid and most useful manner, the sentiments the Holy Fathers expressed touching the reading of Holy Scripture, and the particular care with which they recommended not permitting it indiscriminately to every sort of person. What blindness in Doctors of the Sorbonne, and in Professors of Theology, to have taken four or five passages, either falsely or impertinently alleged, and which one cannot say, with the least semblance of colour, to contain anything positive on the question at issue, for solid proofs of a fact so important as this one — and which they ought to have known would be contradicted by every capable person in the Church!

For these are two very different things, which M. Mallet always tries maliciously to confound. The one: whether the authors of the Index were right to wish that no one should be able to read the versions of the Bible in the vernacular without permission, on account of the abuse made of it at the end of the last century. The other: whether the Holy Fathers did anything of the kind, or whether, on the contrary, they did not exhort everyone indiscriminately to read Holy Scripture. The first has been maintained by great men, and M. Mallet adds nothing to what they have said except impertinences peculiarly his own. But as for the latter — that is, the sentiment of the Fathers concerning the reading of the holy Books — to maintain what M. Mallet maintains, and what his approvers found solid, namely that they recommended, with great care, not to permit it indiscriminately to every sort of person, is to wish to pass, among the learned, for a prodigy of ignorance in matters of antiquity.

This is why I would not believe myself obliged to say more of it, were I writing only for Theologians. But because the assurance with which M. Mallet proposes the greatest

falsehoods may have imposed upon persons of the world who have not read the Fathers, I believe myself obliged, to disabuse them, to oppose several of the most considerable among the Holy Fathers to these four or five whom he has reported with so little reason to support his daydreams. I shall begin with the Latin Fathers, reserving the Greek Fathers for the following chapter. And I place St. Clement among the Latins, because it was at Rome that he wrote, although he wrote in Greek.

St. Clement, Pope

One could not find an older witness, nor one of greater authority after the Apostles, of the spirit and practice of the Church on the subject at hand, than St. Clement, Pope, who was instructed by St. Peter and St. Paul, and whom St. Irenaeus sets against all the heretics of his time — because, having been the third after the Apostles to have occupied the See of Rome, he could bear certain witness to Apostolic Tradition. What he says on the reading of the Sacred Books, in his letter to the Corinthians — so celebrated in antiquity, and recovered again in recent times — is all the more considerable, because the manner in which he speaks of it shows, by its very simplicity, that no one doubted in that time that all Christians read Holy Scripture:

> *You have read, my dear brethren, the Holy Scriptures, and you are well instructed in them; and you have applied yourselves with care to meditate upon the word of God. Preserve it, then, in your memory, and turn it over often in your mind.*

St. Irenaeus

There are scarcely any Fathers who have spoken more favourably of Traditions than St. Irenaeus, going so far as to say, in Book III, chapter 4: *"That if the Apostles had not left us the Holy Scriptures of the New Covenant, we could still have been Christians without them, by following the order of the Tradition they left to those to whom they entrusted the care of the Churches."* And he adds that there are barbarous nations who had embraced the faith in Jesus Christ without letters and without ink, having the doctrine of salvation written in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and carefully guarding the ancient Tradition. But this was apparently because these barbarous nations could not read Scripture, not having it in their own language. And thus, since this is not the ordinary way by which God leads the faithful, and since His intention, in giving them the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles, was that they should use them for their instruction, what this Saint had said in favour of Tradition did not prevent him from saying, in Book V, chapter 20, that it is proper to a Christian to be nourished by Scripture in the bosom of the Church — *in ejus sinu educari et Scripturis Dominicis innutriri* — and that this was signified by what God said to Adam, that he would eat of every tree of Paradise; the Holy Spirit thereby making us understand that all the divine Scriptures were to be our food: *Ab omni ergo ligno Paradisi escas manducabis, ait Spiritus Dei, id est, ab omni Scriptura Dominica manducate.*

St. Hilary

As no one has ever doubted, for more than twelve centuries, that it was permitted to all Christians, of every sex and condition, to read Holy Scripture, what one must seek in the Fathers is not that, having put this in question, they resolved that everyone might read it — for they all suppose this as beyond doubt. But what they do principally is to expand upon showing the great advantages one draws from the reading of the sacred Books, so as to engage everyone to apply themselves to it. And this is what St. Hilary does in various ways, in his Commentary on Psalm 118. He says that the reading of the word of God is a source of devotion and understanding: *"Let us remember, when we have applied ourselves to the reading of Holy Scripture to find there what God commands us and what He desires we do to please Him, what fullness of heavenly understanding our mind, however small in itself, has found itself capable of receiving, and how our lowliness has been filled with ardent desires to enjoy God."* He says that the soul which properly savours Scripture has within it a nourishment that is a seed of eternal life. He says that the reading of Holy Scripture is a source of life, and that one must read and meditate upon it in order to live by it: *"It is with reason,"* he says, *"that David hopes, because his principal occupation was to meditate upon the Law of God. Let us apply ourselves, then, likewise to the reading of the divine Books. Let us labour to know what God asks of us; and let us practise, by the ordering of our lives, what His law commands us. For it is the meditation of the divine Law that makes the Prophet hope that, sustained by God's mercy, he will live the true life"*

St. Ambrose

This Saint is not accustomed to treat things at great length. He contents himself with marking them by short and lively words, which a great man once said held something of the style of the Prophets. It is in this manner that he expressed himself, in various places, on the excellence of Holy Scripture and on our need to read it.

To teach us that it is in the reading of the divine Scriptures that we find our victory and our joy, he says this is what was prefigured by those priestly trumpets which did not merely excite the Jews to conquer their enemies, but made their joy on their feast days: *Non soli hostes harum tubarum sonitu vincuntur, sed et delectationes et dies festi sine his esse non possunt*.

He says that the Prophets' oracles ought always to awaken and rouse us to hasten toward heaven: *Semper te Prophetarum oracula excitent atque commoveant ut ad superiora festines*.

That it is wisdom to delight in this holy nourishment: *Sapientia delectatio alimenti caelestis*.

That the word of God makes men kings, by keeping them from being subject to the passions of the world: *Sermo ejus principes facit, qui non subjiciantur illecebris saecularibus*.

That Holy Scripture gives strength to the soul and fills it with spiritual beauty; that it sustains and strengthens good thoughts, and destroys the power of desires and passions: *Sermo plurimus Scripturarum animam confirmat et quodam spiritalis gratiae colorat vapore*.

Rationabilia quoque inventa corroborat, dissolvitque omnem vim irrationabilium potestatum.

That it is a great remedy against weariness and against temptations: *Remedium taediorum omnium Christus et Scriptura divina, et in tentationibus unicum refugium.* And elsewhere: *Verbum Dei repulsorium est taediorum, quo sopor animae, somnus mentis excluditur.*

That the duty of a Christian is always to meditate upon Scripture, so as to practise it: *Divina intra se volvat oracula; atque ad ea quae complaceant Deo suum informet affectum. Sit meditatus in lege, et nulla eum Dei mandata praetereant.*

That just as the earth is full of remedies for the diseases of the body, Scripture is full of remedies for the diseases of our soul: *Ita etiam praeceptis salutaribus replevit seriem Scripturarum, quibus infirmitas animae sanaretur.*

That the word of God is all things to us: our medicine, our light, the water that washes away our stains, the source of all our goods: *"Speak, Lord Jesus. Thy word is medicine. Thy word is light. Thy word is the washing away of our defilement. Thy word is a fountain. Thou speakest, and sins are washed away. The word of God has become all things to us."*

That Scripture is useful to everyone; that he who is healthy acquires wisdom from it; that it presents to the captive a Redeemer who delivers him, and to the free man a God who rewards him; that it instructs and edifies every sort of person, and that each one finds in it either something to heal his wounds, or something to strengthen him in virtue and procure new merits for him: *Sanus sapientiam acquirit, captivus redemptorem, liber remuneratorem. Omnes aedificat Scriptura divina. In ea invenit unusquisque, quo aut vulnera sua curet, aut merita confirmet.*

That meditation on the Law of God is our sole support in time of adversity, and that it is what makes us find strength when we are most overwhelmed by the misfortunes of this world: *"The meditation of the Law makes it so that in times of tribulation, times when we are humbled by adversities, we can sustain and endure them, so that we are neither too broken by dejection nor cast down."*

That one finds in the reading of Holy Scripture unction, strength, and nourishment. This is what he conveys by the comparison of Athletes, who anointed themselves with oil, exercised continually in wrestling, and nourished themselves with strong meats, to make themselves stronger. He maintains that the reading of the sacred Books must do all this in us: *Ungamus oleo lectionis mentis nostrae lacertos. Sit nobis tota die et nocte exercitii usus in quadam caelestium Scripturarum palaestra, artusque animorum nostrorum salubris ferculorum nostrorum esca confirmet.*

That we must guide ourselves in all our actions by the light of Scripture; that it is the source of our virtue and the advancement of our good works: *"Christ reproaches those who use a lamp,*

if they do not always use it. Let us never neglect the word of God, from which comes the origin of all virtues, and a certain progress in all our works. Let this lamp be lit in every word, in every deed."

That the Books of Scripture are so many spoils that enrich us; that this ought to be our joy: *"I rejoice with reason: without my labour I have found spoils. I have found the Pentateuch, I have found the books of Kings, I have found the writings of the Prophets, I have found Christ, I have found Paul."*

That Scripture must be a continual feast to us; that one finds there stronger meats, such as the Law and the Gospel, and others sweeter and more agreeable, such as the Psalms and the Song of Songs: *"He belches well who has tasted many and sweet precepts of God: the word of God has its own banquets, some stronger, such as the Law and the Gospel, others sweeter, such as the Psalms and the Songs of Songs."*

That he who nourishes himself daily on Scripture no longer hungers for anything else: *"Eat the foods of the heavenly Scriptures; eat daily so that you may not hunger."*

That one must not read it hastily, and with little attention to what one reads; but that even when we no longer have the book in our hands, we ought to do as the clean animals do, who chew the cud, and likewise draw from the depths of our memory this spiritual food to ruminate upon it: *"Let us not pass over what we read carelessly, but even when the book is absent, like clean and ruminating animals, let us bring forth from our inner selves this spiritual food to be chewed over."*

He says that the Gospel of St. Luke is written to be read by all who love God — which must be found in all true Christians, learned or ignorant, of every age and every sex: *"This Gospel,"* he says, in his preface on St. Luke, *"is addressed to Theophilus — that is, to him who loves God. If you love God, it is for you that it is written. Receive the gift of an Evangelist, and what he gives you, as your friend, as a pledge of his friendship. Preserve it with care in the treasury of your heart. Guard this precious deposit. Consider it often, and read it constantly with great care."*

One must therefore exempt from loving God those whom one claims ought not to read the Gospel. For it is certainly quite strange, and one would doubtless have had great difficulty persuading St. Ambrose of it, or any of the Fathers, that being no less capable of loving God for knowing only my maternal tongue, I ought to be deprived of a gift an Evangelist made me, and a pledge of friendship he gave me, according to this Father's thought, by not wishing that I should read what he wrote to be read by all who would love God. Would he have excepted from this women and girls, as profane persons from whom this sanctuary must be closed? It would be folly to entertain such a thought. He says that the words of sacred doctrine — that is, Holy Scripture — are the spiritual marriage of virgins with their divine Bridegroom: *Sacra Doctrina verbis sponso innubit aeterno*. That silence is recommended to them so as to know

Scripture better: *Nulla divinarum sententia fugiet lectionum, si aurem admoveas, vocem premas.* And he exhorts them to seek Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, because He is found nowhere better: *Quaerite illum in Scripturis, ibi melius invenitur.*

One could still cite other passages from St. Ambrose. But here are enough to make known what he thought of the reading of Holy Scripture. It is for M. Mallet's approvers to set against us others, where he testified that the ignorant and women ought not to read the sacred Books. For they must indeed have found some, to have approved what M. Mallet asserts — that the Fathers regarded it as a dangerous innovation, which the Church ought not to tolerate, to permit indiscriminately to everyone the reading of Holy Scripture. We wait, then, for them to show us these. Meanwhile, let us see what the other Fathers will tell us.

St. Jerome

M. Mallet believed he had found in this Father something to support his paradoxes. But although he erred in this only after more capable men than himself, his approvers are not excusable for not having recognized that he was mistaken; nothing being easier than to see the difference between blaming the temerity of those who, being ignorant in the science of Scripture, meddled in teaching it to others (*docent antequam discant*) — which is all St. Jerome does — and saying that it ought not to be permitted indiscriminately to everyone to read Holy Scripture, which is what he would have had to do to support M. Mallet's pretension.

Setting aside, then, what has already been refuted, I shall not repeat what we have also reported from Father Thomassin's book, which established very solidly, from very fine passages of this Father, that he had no thought of failing to enjoin upon Clerics and Religious the reading of Holy Scripture, since he enjoined it even upon Ladies, and upon girls from their most tender youth. But here are others which prove the same thing.

Writing to one of his friends named Gaudentius, among the counsels he gives him for raising a young girl in his care as a Christian, he does not forget to recommend that he have her read Holy Scripture (Epistle 128): *"When,"* he says, *"she has reached the age of seven, when she is capable of shame, and begins to know what she ought to keep silent and to hesitate over what she ought to say, have her learn by heart the Psalms, and until the age of twelve, let her make the treasure of her heart the books of Solomon, the Gospels, the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Prophets."*

He speaks in the same manner to the holy virgin Demetrias, who was further advanced in age and virtue: *"Besides the time,"* he tells her, *"that you must employ in the recitation of the Psalms and in prayer, according to the order prescribed for you at the hours of terce, sext, none, evening, midnight, and morning, which you must never omit, determine also how many hours you must further employ in learning Holy Scripture, and how much time in*

reading it — regarding this exercise not as a painful labour, but as the delight of your soul, and its most precious nourishment."

One of the greatest praises he gives to the holy women whose lives he wrote is the ardour they had for reading Scripture. After describing the admirable penitence of St. Fabiola, he says she went as far as Jerusalem, and that she spent some time in the Monastery of St. Paula, which this Saint directed. On this he speaks in these terms of the conversations he had with her: *"When I recall the conversations we had together, I believe I see her still. Good God, what was her fervour and her attention for Holy Scripture! She ran through the Prophets, the Gospels, and the Psalms, as if she wished to satisfy herself in a violent hunger: she proposed difficulties to me, and preserved in her heart the answers I gave her; she was never weary of learning, and the sorrow for her sins increased in proportion to her increase in knowledge. For as if oil had been thrown on the fire, she felt movements of a still greater fervour."*

This Saint says as much of St. Paula: *"She knew,"* he says, *"Holy Scripture by heart; and although she extremely loved history, because, as she said, it was the foundation of truth, she attached herself nonetheless much more to the allegorical and spiritual sense, and made of it, as it were, the crowning of the edifice of her soul. She begged me earnestly that she and her daughter might read, in my presence, the Old and New Testament, so that I might explain to them the most difficult passages; and unable to resist her continual insistence, I promised to teach her what I had learned of it — not from myself, that is, from the presumption of my own mind, which is the most dangerous of all masters, but from the greatest figures of the Church. I shall also say something that will perhaps seem incredible to those to whom her admirable qualities have given jealousy. She desired to learn the Hebrew language, of which I have acquired some knowledge, and she achieved her design, to such a degree that she chanted the Psalms and spoke it without mixing in any Latin pronunciation — which we see her holy daughter Eustochium still do today."*

He says also, in the same life, that to temper the zeal of this holy woman, who wept over the least faults as though they were great sins, with an abundance of tears, he advised her to spare her eyes and preserve them for the reading of the Gospel: *Ut parceret oculis et eos servaret Evangelicae lectioni.* And finally, he tells us this was not peculiar to her; but that all the girls she had assembled in three Monasteries read the sacred Books just as she did. For they were all obliged, he says, to know the whole Psalter by heart, and to learn something of Holy Scripture every day.

He says still more of St. Marcella: *"Her love,"* he says, *"for Holy Scripture was incredible; and she always sang: 'I have hidden and preserved your words in my heart, so as not to offend you'; and this other verse, where David, speaking of the perfect man, says: 'He sets all his affection on the law of the Lord, and meditates upon it day and night' — understanding by this meditation of the law not the frequent repetition of the words of Scripture, as the Pharisees did, but the practice of them, as the Apostle teaches us when he*

says: Whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all your actions for the glory of God."

Thus did she read Scripture even before having known St. Jerome. But here is what he says of her after she had known him: *"Having only listened in passing to whatever knowledge of Scripture I had been able to acquire through long study, she learned it and possessed it in such a manner that, after my departure, whenever some contestation arose touching passages of Scripture, she was taken as judge. But as she was extremely prudent, and perfectly knew the rules of what the Philosophers call propriety, she answered the questions put to her with such modesty that she reported, as having learned them from me or from someone else, things that came purely from herself — so as to pass for a disciple in that very matter in which she was a very great teacher."*

One sees, then, that St. Jerome praises women not only for reading Scripture for their own particular edification, but for making a study of it, and for applying themselves with ardour to resolving its difficulties. What would M. Mallet have thought of this — he who, at the end of his Examination of the New Testament of Mons, represents as a strange disorder that devout Ladies who love strict morality had found difficulty with a citation a Preacher had made of a passage of St. Paul, and who cries out on this, as if all were lost, that women and the ignorant will soon take the boldness to make themselves judges of the doctrine of the Gospel, if the reading of Holy Scripture in the vernacular is permitted indiscriminately to everyone! If by "making oneself judge of the doctrine of the Gospel" he means preferring one's own judgment to that of the Church, this would doubtless be a great disorder and a horrible presumption. But who gave him the right to make himself judge of the members of Jesus Christ, in wishing that, for not having learned Latin, they should be unable to read the Gospel in the only language they know, except by so wicked a spirit as the one he attributes to them? And if he calls "making oneself judge of the doctrine of Scripture" not to believe blindly everything a particular Preacher might say (which is all he can conclude from his story), let him hear further what St. Jerome says on this, and recognize that the greatest men are the most humble, and that they suffer, without taking offense, that women should contradict them, when it is through a laudable ardour to penetrate the secrets of Scripture. It is in the preface to his Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians, which he made for St. Paula and St. Eustochium; but which he says at the outset might help heal the wound St. Marcella had received through the death of her mother Albina, judging there was no remedy more fitting than explanations of Scripture: *"For I know,"* he says, *"what her ardour is on this. I know what her faith is, and that the fire with which her heart is inflamed makes her surpass her sex, rise above the nature of man, and take pleasure, after the example of Miriam, sister of Moses, in making the drum of the divine volumes resound in crossing the Red Sea of this age. When I was at Rome, she hastened to see me, always to put to me some question on Scripture. And she did not resemble the disciples of Pythagoras, remaining satisfied with all I told her, and paying herself with an authority without reason; but she examined all things,*

and weighed everything with great judgment and penetration of mind — so that I felt I was dealing not so much with a disciple as with a Judge."

Here is the word that makes M. Mallet cry out so, and which appears to him the most insufferable of all abuses.

What would he have done, had he lived in that time, and had he, being of the humour he is, seen women asking to be given the Latin and Greek of the Psalms along with the Hebrew truth? He would have sent them off to spin their distaff; and instead of answering them, he would have taught them that it was not for them to read Holy Scripture; that it had been written only to be read by Priests and Doctors; that it was to profane it to leave it in the hands of the ignorant and women, who ought to content themselves with what they were told in Sermons. I do not doubt he will thank me for explaining his thoughts so well; for he would not have proposed them to the whole Church in a public book, had he and his approvers not found them so reasonable that they believed the Holy Fathers could not have held any others, and that St. Jerome above all had been of their sentiment. Whence comes it, then, that Sunnia and Fretela, writing to him from the depths of a barbarous country, and begging him to instruct them on a very great number of difficulties they had found in the Latin and Greek of the Psalms, far from rebuffing them and attributing to a temerity that ought not to be suffered in women the reading of Holy Scripture and the wish to know its secrets, gives them great praise for it? And after having thanked God for inspiring in barbarous nations a laudable curiosity to understand the Holy Letters, he does not disdain to answer all their questions, with a marvellous care and exactitude; and he gives them at the outset a discourse full of erudition on the various kinds of Greek versions, warning them that the one called common, or of Lucian, was not as pure as that of the Seventy, which was in the Hexapla (that is, in the six-column Bibles), which he had translated into Latin. And finally he gives them this rule (of which a rule of Canon Law was later made): that just as in the New Testament, when the Latin copies do not agree, one must have recourse to the Greek original, so in the Old Testament, when there is diversity between the Greek and Latin copies, one must have recourse to the Hebrew truth, so as to judge, by what is found in the source, what ought to be found in the streams. Is this to judge women unworthy of reading Holy Scripture? Is this to believe it is exposed to profanation, when one exhorts them to read it?

Finally, M. Mallet having opposed to us, quite inappropriately, a passage of this Father from his Commentary on the Prophet Nahum, let us hear what this Saint says on this subject, in this same work, and how he represents it as a particular grace Jesus Christ did us in coming into the world, that He awakened the people from their torpor, by leading them to read the Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, which he calls mountains where the people have taken refuge. This is on these words of chapter 3, verse 18: *Dormitaverunt Pastores tui*, etc.: *"It has always been,"* he says, *"the Devil's design to lull to sleep the souls that ought to watch. We see in the Passion of the Saviour that he overwhelmed the Apostles' eyes with a profound sleep, which obliged Jesus Christ to say to them, to awaken them: Watch and*

pray, that you enter not into temptation; and elsewhere: What I say to you, I say to all: Watch. And because our enemy never ceases trying to prevent those he deceives from watching, and to lull them to sleep by the sweet and pernicious song of the Sirens, the word of God awakens us continually, and says to us: Arise, you who sleep, and Christ will give you light. It seems, then, that the Prophet marks for us that, at the coming of Christ, when His word would spread through the world, and the Church's doctrine would be heard there, and Nineveh, that beautiful and famous courtesan, would be on the point of being destroyed, the people, who had before been asleep under the masters of the Law, would awaken, would be filled with the same spirit that had spoken through the Prophets, and would go to the mountains of the Scriptures — Moses, Joshua, the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Evangelists; and having withdrawn there, and having applied themselves greatly to the reading of these divine works, which are as the Mountains of the Church, if they found no one to instruct them (for the harvest is great, and there are few labourers), their devotion and piety would be praised for having withdrawn to these mountains — that is, for reading the Scriptures — and the negligence of the masters would be blamed."

This needs no commentary. One sees that this Father, far from disapproving that the people should read Holy Scripture, praises them for applying themselves to this holy reading, even when they lack masters to explain it to them — because he supposed, as did all the other Saints, that even the simple and those without any learning, reading it with piety, find enough there to nourish themselves and to maintain in themselves the spirit of God.

The Author of the Letter to Celantia

This Letter, which is an admirable instruction for Christian Ladies, has been attributed by some to St. Jerome, and by others to St. Paulinus; and it is worthy of either, for the spirit of piety with which it is filled — there being only the difference of style that has led scholars to judge it belongs to neither of these two Saints. But whoever its Author, there is nothing more Christian, nor more solid, than the counsel he gives to a Lady of great quality named Celantia; and one of those on which he insists most is to read Holy Scripture very carefully:

> *The principal of your cares,* he tells her, *must be to know well the law of God, so that you may see, by its guidance and its light, the examples of the Saints as if they were present to you, and learn there, by the counsels you will find, what one ought to do and what one ought to avoid. For it is a very great help for making progress in virtue, to fill one's soul with the word of God, and to meditate continually upon what one wishes to practise. This is why the Lord once commanded, through Moses, a coarse people little accustomed to obedience, to attach to the fringes of their garments scarlet-coloured tags, on which His commandments were marked, so as to remember them every time they cast their eyes upon them. And it is on the subject of these fringes that Our Lord rebukes the Pharisees, because, perverting the use that ought to be made of them, they used them not to remember God's commandments, but out of ostentation, so that the people might esteem them more holy, believing them more*

exact observers of God's Law. But you, who keep not the commandments of the letter but the commandments of the spirit, must take care to remember them in an entirely spiritual manner, and you must not so much take care to repeat them by memory as to think of them unceasingly. Let Holy Scripture be continually in your mind, to turn over. And do not believe it suffices you to keep the divine precepts in your memory, if you forget them by not keeping them in your actions. You must know and retain them only so as to accomplish what they command you: for those who only listen to the law will not for that be righteous before God; but only those are righteous who observe it. This divine law has an extent like a wide and vast field. Being full of various testimonies of truth, like celestial flowers and excellent fruits, it nourishes and strengthens the soul of him who occupies himself in reading it, and gives him marvellous pleasure. And it is a very great help for preserving justice in oneself, to be perfectly instructed in this law, and to turn it over always in one's mind.

St. Augustine

St. Augustine has said so many things, in so many places, to the advantage of this divine reading, that I would be too lengthy were I to report everything found on it in his works. He took care, above all, to remark, in various places, that just as the doctrine of Scripture is for everyone, so too its manner of teaching is proportioned to every sort of condition, even to children and peasants, servants and maidservants.

This is what leads him to say, in Book VI of the Confessions, chapter 5: *"The authority of Holy Scripture seemed to me all the more worthy of belief, more holy and more venerable, in that, on the one hand, it is simple in style, and proportioned to the understanding of the simplest and least skilled readers, while on the other hand it encloses, in the sense hidden beneath the bark of the letter, the sublime dignity of its secret mysteries — thus exposing itself to the eyes and to the reading of all men, by very clear terms and very plain and ordinary expressions, while at the same time exercising all the mind and all the capacity of those who have a higher light and a more piercing view. Thus, by so popular a language, as by a public and royal road, it receives all men into its bosom; and by the penetration of its obscure truths, as by roads difficult to find and by narrow paths, it leads certain particular persons toward you. And though the number of these persons is small enough, it would nonetheless not be as great as it is, had Scripture not been raised to that high point of authority it has acquired over all peoples, and did it not draw to itself all the nations of the earth, by the holy humility of its language."*

This is what leads him to say, in Book V of *On Genesis Literally Interpreted*, chapter 3, speaking to all the faithful, and regarding them in the greatest weakness they might be in: *"I exhort you to advance, making use of the help Scripture offers you, since it never abandons your weakness, and is, with regard to you, like a mother who walks slowly, to accommodate herself to her child and make him walk with her. It speaks in such a manner, according to the different states of men, that it mocks the proud by its loftiness, to which they cannot*

attain; that it terrifies, by its depth, those who strive to penetrate it; that it nourishes, by the truths with which it is filled, the greatest souls, and gives children the nourishment proportioned to them, by the familiarity with which it speaks to them."

This is also what leads him to say — as we have already reported in chapter 6 of the second Book — writing to Volusian, whom he exhorted to read Holy Scripture though he was not yet baptized: *"that its manner of speaking is so admirable that, at the same time as it is accessible to everyone, there is scarcely anyone who can penetrate it. That in the clear things it contains, it is like a familiar friend who speaks without artifice to the heart of the learned and the ignorant alike; and that when it hides truths under mysterious expressions, it does not do so by a proud language capable of repelling small minds and taking from them the boldness to approach it, as the poor fear to approach the rich; but it invites everyone, by a simple discourse, to come there and seek nourishment in the manifest truths, and to exercise themselves in discovering the hidden ones — having, however, in both, only the same foundation of wisdom and light. It is by this that disordered minds are corrected, that simple minds are nourished, and that the greatest minds sustain themselves in ineffable delights."*

This is what leads this Saint to say, in the Book *On True Religion*, chapter 17: *"The manner of teaching all that it teaches — partly by reasons very easy to understand, partly by similitudes and figures contained in discourses, in deeds and in mysteries — is so accommodated to the capacity of all the persons God wishes to instruct and exercise, that it perfectly comprehends within itself the rule of all that one can teach of reason and truth. For the mysteries found there relate, in God's design, to the things said most clearly there. And if there were only things very easy to understand, one would not seek truth there with the care and labour it deserves, nor would one have the joy of having found it there."*

And in chapter 51 of the same Book, which he made when newly baptized — far from believing, as M. Mallet imagines, that it did not belong to him to read Holy Scripture, he exhorts, in these terms, all the faithful to read it: *"Forgetting and rejecting the follies and amusements of theatres and poets, let us nourish our soul with the meditation and study of the divine Scriptures. And finding how it is fatigued and tormented by the hunger and thirst of a vain curiosity, and how vainly it seeks to satisfy and content itself with deceptive phantoms, which are but as painted meats, let us satisfy and quench it with this celestial food and this drink that divine Scripture presents to us. Let us instruct ourselves in this school, so noble and so worthy of the children of God."*

This is what leads him to say, in Book XV of the *City of God*, chapter 25, that God wished Scripture to be proportioned to the capacity of all men. For having remarked that the anger of God is not in Him a passion that troubles Him, but a judgment by which He punishes crime, he adds: *"But if Scripture did not employ these familiar expressions, it would not be proportioned to the capacity of all the men whose good and advantage it wishes to procure, by astonishing the proud through its loftiness, awakening the slothful through the*

importance of what it treats, exercising the diligent through its difficulties, and nourishing the intelligent through its lights. Now it would not be fit to do all this, had it not first lowered itself, and had it not descended, so to speak, toward those who lie prostrate upon the earth."

M. Mallet's approvers must have learned by now, from the New Breviary of Paris, what a daydream it is to imagine that the Holy Scriptures are only for Priests and Doctors, and that they ought not to be read by the Laity. For here is what is said of St. Augustine in the lessons of his feast, when, having only recently been disabused of the errors of the Manichaeans, he was not yet fully persuaded of the truth of our Religion: *"The Sermons of St. Ambrose having given him more inclination toward the Catholics, he began to read with great care the Holy Scriptures, which he had previously despised for the simplicity of their style." Cum Ambrosii frequens esset auditor paulatim in Catholicos propensior factus, sacros Codices, a quorum lectione prius abhorrebat, evolvere studiosus coepit, et nova vita institutum meditari.* Was it wrong to note, as something worthy of praise, this reading of the sacred Books, done by a man who was not yet baptized, nor even persuaded of all the truths of our Religion? And whence comes it that St. Augustine never accused himself before God of having had too much boldness in reading Holy Scripture at that time, which ought to have been closed to him as to a profane person, if we are to believe M. Mallet? Far from that, he complains, in Book VII of his Confessions, chapter 20, *"that the books of the Philosophers, having made him more learned, had also made him more vain; and that, on the contrary, the Holy Scriptures, having humbled him and softened his mind, had made him remark the difference there is between vain confidence in one's own strength and humble recognition of one's weakness, between those who know where they must go but do not know the way they must take, and those who know the road to our blessed homeland — which does not merely lead us there to have the sight of it, but gives us its possession and enjoyment."* He then describes, in the following chapter, the effect this reading had upon his soul: *"I began then to read Holy Scripture with an extraordinary ardour, and to revere those words so venerable, which your Holy Spirit itself dictated. But nothing touched me so much as the Epistles of St. Paul; and I saw vanish in a moment all those difficulties that made me believe that in some places he contradicted himself, and that his words did not agree with those of the ancient law and the Prophets. I recognized that these Scriptures, so pure and so simple, are animated by but one spirit, and contain but the same meanings, and I learned to consider them with a joy mingled with respect and fear."*

Finally, this great Saint does not merely counsel all the faithful indiscriminately to read Holy Scripture (which appears to M. Mallet and his approvers a strange abuse); he further represents to them that it is not enough to do so rarely, but that they must apply themselves to this divine reading every day. This is in the fifty-sixth sermon *de Tempore*, where one sees clearly enough that he speaks to all his hearers without distinction of age or sex: *"Hold it,"* he says, *"for very certain, my dear brethren, that such is our flesh when it takes nourishment only once in several days, such is our soul when it does not nourish itself very often on the word of God. For as hunger and lack of food dries and wastes our body, so the soul that*

neglects to strengthen itself by the bread of the word of God becomes weak and arid, and is fit for no good work. Consider, then, whether it is just that our body, which is formed only of earth, should take two meals a day, while our soul, which is the image of God, scarcely receives the word of life after having been deprived of it for several days — though it would be reasonable to treat better in us the image of God than our flesh. For those who think only of the necessities and comforts of their bodies resemble beasts, and disfigure in themselves the image of God. The flesh must therefore be governed as a slave, and one must take care principally of the needs of the soul, since it is legitimately the mistress. For if we act otherwise, if we do not recognize that we have been made in the image of God, and if we think more of our flesh than of our soul, I fear the Holy Spirit will reproach us through His Prophet: When man was in honour, he did not understand it; he imitated the beasts that lack reason, and became like them. Continue to hear, in the Church, as you are accustomed, the reading of Holy Scripture, and read it again in your homes. If anyone is so occupied that he cannot take time to read Holy Scripture before his meal, let him not neglect, while eating, to read something of it — so that at the same time as the body is nourished with material food, the soul may be nourished with the word of God, and that the whole man — that is, the exterior and interior — may rise from table having received a salutary and holy nourishment. For if nourishment is given only to the body, and the soul is not nourished with the word of God, it is to satisfy the slave and leave the mistress languishing with hunger. And you cannot be ignorant how unjust this is."

And in the following Sermon: *"Hear the divine lessons in the Church, and read them again in your homes."*

And in the thirty-eighth, on the Saints: *"Strive, as much as you can, with God's help, to read often, in your homes, the divine lessons, and to hear them in Church with affection and submission."*

We see also that St. Augustine supposes his people did what he recommended to them — that is, that they read Holy Scripture — as M. Mallet, as well as his approvers, ought to have learned, at least by reading their own Breviary. For on the Monday of the fourth week of Lent, in the homily taken from the tenth treatise on St. John, this Saint speaks thus: *"What did those sellers whom Jesus Christ drove from the temple sell there? They sold there the things the Jews needed for the sacrifices of that time. For your charity knows that this people being carnal, God had willed that they offer Him sacrifices suited to the hardness of their hearts, to turn them from the worship of idols — so that in that time oxen, sheep, and pigeons were sacrificed to God. You know this, because you have read it." Nostis quia legistis.*

And in the first Sermon on Psalm 36, having said that God warns us that the penance we might do in this world with profit will serve us nothing if we wait to do it after death, he adds that we would have some cause to complain that we were not warned of this, if Scripture were not read throughout the whole earth, or if one could not find copies of it everywhere to purchase. He therefore supposes that all Christians had full liberty to buy it, and that it was

their own fault if they did not have it, and did not read it. And he supposes this so thoroughly that, in the twenty-eighth chapter of the book *On the Christian Combat*, which he says he made in a simple style for the ignorant, he accuses them of great negligence for their salvation, if, for want of reading Holy Scripture, they let themselves be deceived by heretics in things that are clear in the Scriptures: *"Let us not listen,"* he says, *"to those who say that the promise the Saviour made to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled either in St. Paul, or in Montanus, or in Manes. Those who believe this are either in a great blindness, not to see the contrary in Scripture, which is evident on this point, or in a strange negligence for their salvation, not to read it." Tam caeci sunt isti, ne Scripturas manifestas non intelligant, aut tam negligentes salutis suae ut omnino non legant.* And after having refuted this error by the second chapter of Acts, he says that the Manichaeans and the Montanists deceived on this point only those who, being within the Church, were negligent in learning their faith, which is manifest in Scripture. *"And what is deplorable,"* he says, *"is that, having great negligence in instructing themselves in Catholic truths (by reading Holy Scripture, as he had marked before), they listen with great attention to what the heretics tell them." Ipsam fidem catholicam quae in Scripturis manifesta est nolunt discere, et quod est gravius et multum dolendum, cum in Catholica fide negligenter versentur, haereticis diligenter aures accommodant.*

Cassian

The fourteenth Conference of Cassian is on spiritual knowledge, which he makes to consist entirely in the knowledge of the Scriptures. And he speaks of it in these terms, in chapter 10: *"If you desire to acquire the true knowledge of Scripture, you must hasten, before all things, to establish yourself in a firm humility of heart, which will lead you little by little, through a perfect charity, not to that knowledge which puffs up, but to that which enlightens and warms. For it is impossible that an impure mind should possess the gift of spiritual knowledge. This is why, my dearest son, apply all your care to prevent your studies and your readings from becoming, in the end, not a means of acquiring this light of knowledge and that future glory which Scripture promises to the learned and the wise, but the instrument of your eternal ruin, through vanity and presumption."*

He shows, in the same chapter, that one must read Scripture, and even learn much of it by heart, even while one still has little understanding of it — because with time, as one advances in piety, one will discover there truths one did not at first comprehend: *"This is why,"* he says, *"one must always read and learn by heart Holy Scripture, and never tire of repeating and rereading it. This continual meditation will produce for us two great goods. The first, that while we thus apply ourselves to reading and retaining Scripture, our soul will not meanwhile be troubled by any evil thought; and the other, that after having laboured much to retain it by heart — even though our soul, burdened by this labour, could comprehend nothing of what it read — when, being disengaged from external actions and from the sight of sensible objects, we reflect upon it during the night, in the silence of our meditation and prayer, we find there much meaning that had before been very hidden from us; and thus*

God sometimes reveals to us, in this repose, and as in this sleep of our soul, the mysteries that had before been entirely obscure and unknown to us."

This is what he proves in chapter 11, and he brings an example that shows that the most unrefined, capable only of the simplest senses of Scripture, do not fail to profit from it, but that those who are more advanced find there more elevated and more spiritual senses: *"When,"* he says, *"our heart begins to renew itself through so holy a study, the whole face of Scripture will also renew itself in some manner for it. It will appear more beautiful to it in proportion as it becomes purer; and it will grow within it in proportion as it grows itself. For Holy Scripture is understood by each man according to the capacity and the disposition found in him: it appears earthly to the carnal, and heavenly to the spiritual. So that those who before believed it entirely wrapped in darkness and clouds see it, once they have become purer, so filled with light that they cannot bear its brightness. But to clarify this by some example, it will suffice for us to report a commandment of the law, to show that there is no precept in Scripture that does not extend to every sort of person, and that is not taken differently, according to the diversity of their qualities and their minds. It is said in the law: You shall not commit fornication. A carnal man, still engaged in shameful passions, will usefully obey this precept, practising it according to the letter, and according to the simple sense of these words."* He says afterward that others, more spiritual, will understand it of the renunciation of idolatry, or of Jewish superstitions, or of heresy; and finally, that in the judgment of a perfect man, all that separates him from the sight and presence of God passes for a most impure fornication, though it be secret and spiritual.

St. Gregory, Pope

We have already seen, in the sixth chapter of the preceding Book, what this great Pope says to the advantage of the Scriptures, in his letter to St. Leander, Archbishop of Seville, and in what manner he shows that it is fit to be read by the simplest and least learned as well as by the most learned and the greatest minds — because, if it encloses mysteries capable of exercising the most enlightened minds, it also contains clear truths fit to nourish the simple and the least learned; that it carries on its exterior what may suckle children, and keeps, in its most secret folds, what may ravish with admiration the most sublime minds — being like a river whose water is so shallow in certain places that a lamb might pass through it, and so deep in others that an elephant would swim.

He represents the same thing, as we have seen in the same place, in the Preface to the twentieth Book of his Morals. And this same work is full, in various other places, of vivid exhortations to read Holy Scripture. But nothing ought to touch truly pious souls more than what he says of it in his Homily 15 on Ezekiel — since, placing all their happiness in loving God, they have nothing more to fear than the cooling of their love. Now it is one of the effects this holy Pope attributes to the reading of Holy Scripture, to prevent charity from growing cold: *"Take great care, I beg you, my dear brethren, to meditate well upon the words of God. Do not neglect these divine writings, which are as letters our Creator has addressed to us.*

One draws great advantage from them; for it is by this reading that our heart is rekindled, and that we prevent our love from being extinguished or slackened by the cold of iniquity."

This holy Pope could not declare himself more on this subject than he does in his letter 40 of Book IV, writing to a Layman of great merit named Theodore — whom, according to M. Mallet's principles, he ought to have warned not to have the presumption to read the Holy Scriptures, because, if we are to believe him, they were not given by God to the Church to be read by the people, but only by Priests and Doctors. Yet this is not what St. Gregory thinks of; and far from it, he does exactly the contrary. For here is how he spoke to this layman on this subject of the reading of Holy Scripture:

> *The more friendship one has, the more free and bold one is to say what one thinks to one's friends. I have a complaint to make to the heart, so gentle and so amiable, of my most illustrious son Theodore — that having received from God the talent of intelligence, the talent of affairs, the talent of mercy and charity toward the poor, he is nonetheless so incessantly attached to the occupations of this age, and to satisfying the persons who continually come to him, that he neglects to read every day some words of his Redeemer. For what is Holy Scripture, if not a letter of the almighty God, which He has the goodness to address to His creature? And certainly, wherever you might be, if you received a letter from the Emperor, at whatever hour it might be, you would not delay reading it; you would have no rest, and you would not wish to sleep before knowing what His Imperial Majesty had sent you word of. Yet the Emperor of heaven, the Lord of men and Angels, has sent you letters that concern your own life, and you neglect, my dear and illustrious son, to read these divine letters, though you ought rather to have ardour to learn what they contain. I conjure you, then, to apply yourself to them henceforth with a singular affection, and to meditate every day upon the words of your Creator. Learn, in the words of God, what is, for you, the heart of God, so as to excite yourself to sigh with greater ardour toward eternal goods, and so that your soul may be inflamed with greater desires for the happiness of heaven.*

Finally, far from this Pope having been of M. Mallet's opinion — who takes it for a great abuse and a profanation of Scripture that it should be read by the ignorant — he approves that even those who do not know how to read, which seems to be the last degree of ignorance, should borrow the eyes of others to have it read to them. For here is what he relates of St. Servulus, in his Homily 15 on the Gospels:

> *Under that portico by which one passes to go to the Church of St. Clement, there was a poor man named Servulus, whom many of you knew as well as I did, who, in his poverty, was rich in merits, and whom a long illness had rendered helpless; for he remained paralyzed from his youth to the end of his life, and far from being able to stand, he could not even raise himself sitting up in his bed. It was not possible for him to bring his hand to his mouth, nor to turn from one side to the other. He had only his mother and his brother to serve him; and whatever alms he received, he distributed*

by their hands to the poor. He did not know how to read; but having purchased Holy Scripture, he had it read to him continually by persons of virtue, toward whom he practised hospitality. So that he had learned it perfectly, as far as he was capable, although, as I have already said, he could not read.

St. Bernard

I believe I ought to join to the other Fathers the one who has been called the last of the Fathers. Nothing is more edifying than what he says of the advantages one draws from the reading of the word of God, in whatever state one may be, in his Sermon 24 *de Diversis*:

> *Let the sinner,* he says, *hear this word, and his belly shall be troubled — that is, it will fill the carnal soul with a salutary dread. Were you dead in sin, if you hear the voice of the Son of God, you shall live; for His word is spirit and life. If your heart is hardened, remember what is said in Scripture: He sent forth His word, and it shall melt the ice. If you are lukewarm, and fear being vomited from the mouth of God, do not cease to apply yourself to the word of the Lord, and it will inflame you; for His word is all of fire. If you complain of being in the darkness of ignorance, hear what the Lord will say to you, and His word will be a lamp to light your steps, and a light that will shine on the path where you walk. You will tell me you are all the more in sorrow for this, that being more enlightened you see your least faults more clearly. But the Father will sanctify you in the truth, which is His word, and it will be said to you what was said to the Apostles: You are clean because of the word I have spoken to you. When you have washed your hands, He will prepare for you a magnificent feast, where it will not be bread alone that nourishes you, but every word that has come from the mouth of God; and it will be by the power of this divine nourishment that you will run in the way of His commandments. Were you besieged by an enemy army, encamped around you, coming to attack you in battle, take the spiritual sword, which is the word of God, and it will make you triumph over your enemies. And if, as sometimes happens, you are wounded in this combat, He will send forth His word, and you will be healed, and it will draw you from your languor. And if you feel yourself faltering, invoke Him and cry to Him: My feet have so faltered that they have almost turned aside from the way; and He will strengthen you by His word. Persevere, then, in nourishing yourself with the word of God: exercise yourself in it continually, until the Spirit tells you to rest from your labours — that is, until death.*

Chapter IX Passages of the Greek Fathers Touching the Reading of Holy Scripture

Clement of Alexandria

This ancient Father can teach us what was the sentiment of his time — the end of the second century and the beginning of the third — touching the reading of Holy Scripture.

Having said, in the first Book of the *Paedagogus*, chapter 11, that the word of God is the health of our soul; that formerly it was through Moses that it served us as Pedagogue, and afterward through the Prophets; but that finally the Father gave us His beloved Son, whom we must hear — he says, in the third book of the same work, chapter 8, that this divine Pedagogue proposes to us in Scripture every sort of instruction, examples, and parables, to draw us from evil and lead us to good. And in chapter 11, he raises this objection against himself: *But we are not all, you will tell me, capable of this divine Philosophy*. To which he answers in these terms: *"We are not all, then, capable of arriving at true life? What is it you tell me? How is it that you have believed? How is it that you love God and your neighbour, if you are not capable of the Philosophy of which I speak to you? How do you love yourselves, if you have no passion for true life? But I have not learned to read, you will tell me further. If you do not know how to read, you cannot excuse yourself from understanding what will be read to you."*

One sees from this that the Church, in her first fervour and her greatest purity, regarded it as the first duty of a true Christian to hear God speaking in His Scriptures, to learn from them the true Philosophy — which she made to consist in believing with a living and enlightened faith, in loving God above all things and one's neighbour as oneself, and in loving oneself in the manner ordained for us to obtain true life; and that this obligation was considered so universal that not even those who had not learned to read were exempted from it, because they could listen to what others read to them.

He teaches the same thing in his other work. He says in Book VII that the sacrifice of a Christian is prayer, the praises of God, and the reading of the sacred Books; and that one must expect to fall, when one does not follow God who guides us, and who guides us by the divinely inspired Scriptures.

Origen

It is not only what Origen wrote that can teach us what was the spirit of the Church in his time touching the reading of Holy Scripture; it is still more the manner in which he was raised by St. Leonidas his father. For Eusebius tells us, in Book VI of his History, chapter 2, that although he was not yet a full 17 years old when his father suffered death for Jesus Christ, this holy Martyr had not only had him learn what is commonly called the fine letters, but had also applied him, with particular care, to the study of Holy Scripture, in preference to all the sciences of the Greeks — even wishing him to learn passages by heart and recite some of them

each day; and that he found himself in this happily seconded by his son's own inclination, who applied himself with marvellous ardour to this study, and who, not content with the first sense that presented itself to his mind, strove even then to penetrate the most hidden and most spiritual sense of the sacred Books.

Whatever enemies Origen may have had, no one has ever suspected Eusebius of not having told the truth in what he reports of the early years of his life. And St. Jerome, in his letter to Pammachius, where he wrote most forcefully against Origen, felt himself obliged to acknowledge that he had been a great man from his childhood: *Magnus vir ab infantia*. Now St. Leonidas was but a Layman, and Origen, during his father's lifetime, was but a child. Who then can doubt that this is convincing proof that the Church found it very good that Laymen should read Holy Scripture, and that they should have it read by their children from their most tender youth? After this it would scarcely be necessary to report anything further of this ancient Author, there being no room to doubt that he found it good that others should do what a Father as holy as his own — whose faith was crowned by martyrdom — would not have failed to do toward him, had it not been the spirit and sentiment of the Church. I shall nonetheless report some further passages.

In the Prologue on the Song of Songs, he reports that ordinance (which M. Mallet was blind enough to allege as though it favoured him) that the wise men and Doctors among the Jews had them read, from their earliest youth, all the Holy Scriptures, except four passages whose reading they reserved for a more mature age.

And he confirms the same thing in his homily 19 on St. Matthew. For he says that the vineyard of which Jesus Christ speaks in His parable is Holy Scripture, which the Father of the household had let out to the vinedressers — that is, He had given it to the Jews, and not only to the Priests, but also to the common people — which is directly opposed to M. Mallet's daydreams. And he adds, in the same place, that this is also for us; that Scripture is our vineyard, and that the fruits God expects us to render Him from this vineyard is that our life be so regulated by His divine instructions that it be irreproachable, and that there be nothing but edification in our conduct.

And in the eighth Book on the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 11, he says that all the Holy Scriptures are that table of which it is said in the Psalm: *let their table be made a snare for them* — which the Apostle applies to the Jews: that this was the table of the people of Israel, because the Oracles of God were entrusted to them, and everything called the Old Testament; that each of them could sit at this table, to nourish himself with the word of God that was presented to them in the Books of the Law and the Prophets.

One of his finest works is without doubt the Refutation of Celsus's book against the Christian Religion. This pagan Philosopher had shown contempt for the sacred Books, as being written in a simple style, which had nothing comparable to the beauty of that of the Philosophers. But it is precisely by this that Origen elevates the Holy Scriptures above the most eloquent works

of the Greeks. He maintains, in the fourth Book, that this is precisely what makes the Holy Scriptures more estimable — that they accommodate themselves to the capacity of the simplest among the people, which these tellers of fables, of whom the Greeks make such great esteem, could not do. And expanding further on this matter in the seventh Book, he refutes this objection in these terms:

> *If a Greek,* he says, *wished to instruct the Egyptians and Syrians in a doctrine that could heal the diseases of their souls, he would take care to learn their language, preferring to speak as a barbarian — which appears shameful to the Greeks — rather than, speaking his own tongue, be useless to these peoples. Thus divine Wisdom, wishing to profit not only the learned Greeks, as they esteem themselves, but all men, has lowered itself to the capacity of the simplest of the infinite multitude of persons it designed to instruct; and it has wished thereby to draw in even the ignorant, and make itself heard by them, using their ordinary language. And it has had all the more reason to adopt this conduct, in that, after this first introduction into the Holy Scriptures — of which everyone is capable — one can seek there more sublime senses: for all who read them recognize that, when one examines them carefully, one finds there hidden truths, far more elevated than what appears there at first, and that one finds all the more of them the more one applies oneself to it. It is certain, then, that Jesus Christ has served the human race more, by this language Celsus calls rustic, than Plato has done by all his eloquent discourses.*

It is, then, according to this Father, to be ungrateful toward God, and to fail to recognize the grace He has done us in lowering Himself to stammer with us, so as to teach all men the truths of salvation in a manner proportioned to the capacity of the simplest — to pretend that only the learned and the skilful according to the world may take the liberty of reading the Holy Scriptures, and that women and the ignorant are profane persons to whom it ought not to be permitted to enter this sanctuary. This is what never entered the mind of any of these Fathers; and Origen makes us well understand how far removed he was from it, when, addressing all the faithful without distinction, he exhorts them in these terms, in his Homily 9 on Leviticus, to read these divine Books unceasingly:

> *We beg you not to content yourselves with hearing the word of God when it is read in Church, but to apply yourselves to it also in your homes, and to meditate upon it day and night in the law of the Lord. For Jesus Christ is present there just as in the Church, and those who seek Him find Him everywhere. This is why we are commanded in the law to meditate upon the law of God both when we walk and when we rest in our homes, and when we are in bed and when we rise. A thought comes into your mind, you are tempted to consent to an illicit desire; know that this comes to you from your enemy; drive it at once from your heart. And what must be done for this? You need a hand to help you. Let the sacred Books be in your hands to read*

them; let the commandments of God be before your eyes. You will be disposed to reject all that comes to you from your enemy.

To which he adds: *"Do you wish to know what nourishes our mind? It is the reading of the sacred Books, continual prayers, and pious instructions."*

Sts. Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil

We shall not separate these two Fathers whom God had united in so many ways. The single passage of the first, which M. Mallet alleges twice to support his daydreams, suffices to confound him, and to justify exactly the contrary of what he claims, as we have already shown. For, praising the law of the Jews, who did not wish the Song of Songs to be read before the age of twenty-five, nor certain other passages, he adds that they left all the other books in everyone's hands, and that they were exposed to being read by every sort of person from their childhood.

He says in another place that, adoring the eternal Word as our God, if it is permitted us to seek some delights in this life, it must be only in the reading of the word of God and in the meditation of His law.

St. Basil, having expanded further on what concerns the rules of Christian life, one finds in him also more things on the advantage one draws from the reading of Holy Scripture. He speaks of it in these terms in his Preface on the Psalms:

> *All the divinely inspired Scriptures have been given to us by the Holy Spirit, so that, being as a storehouse filled with every sort of remedy for the healing of our souls, each person might find there remedies suited to his particular maladies. The Prophets instruct us in certain things; the historical books teach us others, and we draw other instructions from the Law. The book of Proverbs also gives the Church other counsels for the regulation of morals. But that of the Psalms seems to comprehend all that is useful in the others, so as to profit every sort of person.*

In his first letter to St. Gregory of Nazianzus, where he describes in an admirable manner what ought to be the occupations of a person who wishes to give himself entirely to God, he does not fail to mark, as one of the principal ones, the reading and meditation of the Holy Scriptures:

> *One of the greatest means,"* he says, *"of learning to satisfy one's duties is the meditation and study of the divinely inspired Scriptures. For they are all filled with unction; and the lives of many holy persons written there are as living images proposed to us so that we might imitate them, and walk in the footsteps of the great men of this divine commonwealth. Whoever, then, feels himself weak in some matter, if he makes this reading familiar to himself, will find there remedies proportioned to his languors and his infirmities.*

In the Shorter Rules, question 95, he says it is useful and necessary that each person learn from the Holy Scriptures what is proper to his state, both to establish himself further in piety and to avoid being carried away by the maxims of the world. He adds, on question 235, that those who have charge of others (by which he means not the Priests, but those who had some office among the Monks, who at that time were ordinarily only Laymen) ought to learn more things from the Scriptures, because they must know what concerns every sort of condition, so as to be able to make known the will of God to all those under their charge, and instruct each one in what is his duty. But that private individuals ought, in reading Scripture, to learn carefully what concerns them, and to practise it.

But can one read without some dread what he says on Psalm 37? He would have us imagine Scripture as being presented to Jesus Christ when He shall be seated on His Tribunal to judge us, and he says that it is to these divine rules that we shall be confronted. Ought we not, then, he adds, to study with great attention what Scripture teaches us?

Perhaps persons prejudiced by M. Mallet's thoughts will imagine that this at least does not concern women and girls, whom he believes it a most unworthy thing to let read Scripture. Let us consult this Saint further, to learn from himself whether this was indeed his sentiment.

In his Book on Virginity, he says that the Bride of wisdom must not be ignorant, but must fill herself with the wisdom of God through the continual meditation of His Law, and take all her delights in reading the Old and New Testament, which will lead her by the hand to her Bridegroom.

In his letter 284, to a Lady of quality who had asked his counsel on her conduct — after having declared to her that, by the warnings God had given her in a dream, it appeared He asked of her that she apply herself to regulating the state of her soul and purifying the eyes with which she must one day see God — he adds: *"that if you seek your consolation in the divine Scriptures, you will have need neither of me nor of anyone else to mark for you what will be proper for your conduct; for the Holy Spirit will give you all the counsels that will be necessary for you; He will smooth the road by which you must walk, and will lead you there by the hand."*

And in the following letter, to another Lady of quality named Eleutheria: *"I greet,"* he says, *"your illustrious daughter, and I beg you to advise her to persevere in the meditation of the word of God, so that she may preserve the advantages of so good an education, and that at the same time as her body takes its natural growth, her soul may increase in virtue by this divine reading."*

St. Gregory of Nyssa

This Saint doubted no more than the other Fathers that the reading of Holy Scripture was fitting for everyone. But he explained himself further on this with regard to the Psalms, because the commentary he made on them gave him occasion to speak of it. He says, then, of

the Psalms what the other Fathers have said of all the Holy Scriptures — that they are composed in so admirable a manner that every sort of person is in a state to profit from them:

> *For not only,* he says, *do perfect men, who have the eyes of the soul purified, become capable of the instructions the Holy Spirit gives there; but women themselves find as much advantage there as if they had been written only for them. They give as much joy to those still in Christian infancy as toys give to children. They serve as staff and resting-bed to those broken by old age; and those in the vigour of spiritual age regard them as a particular gift heaven grants them. Let him, then, who is sad and overwhelmed by some great affliction, consider them as a letter of consolation God sends him. Let those who journey by land or sea, who exercise sedentary arts, and, in a word, all the faithful, men as well as women, of whatever manner of life or condition they may be, healthy or sick, persuade themselves that they deprive themselves of a great fruit in neglecting to recite these divine Canticles. They ought to form, even among true Christians, the principal part of the rejoicing at feasts and the joy of weddings.*

Theodoret

Theodoret, in his commentary on Isaiah, explaining these words — *Draw water with joy from the fountains of the Saviour* — says that these are the divine Scriptures the Prophet calls the fountains of the Saviour, because it is from there that those who have sincere faith draw with joy.

And in his letter 14, to console a Lady who had lost her husband, he assures her she will find her consolation in the reading of Holy Scripture: *"For it is for this,"* he tells her, *"that from childhood it is to us as a sacred breast, to which we must be attached, in reading and meditating upon it, so that if some malady befalls our soul, we may find there a salutary remedy, through the holy instructions we shall have drawn from it."*

St. John Chrysostom

I have reserved this Saint for the final witness of the Church's spirit on this subject, because there is none who has spoken of it with such force, and because it must be granted that no one has ever been able to find fault with the exhortations, so vivid and so frequent, that he made to all the faithful generally, to read Holy Scripture — since his enemies never reproached him for it, which they would not have failed to do, had what M. Mallet claims had the least shadow of plausibility: that it was then regarded as an abuse that ought not to be allowed into the Church, to let everyone read the sacred Books. And thus, one cannot act in good faith in this dispute without recognizing that what I have reported of the other Fathers, and what I am about to report of this one, must be considered not as the particular opinions of these great men, but as authentic testimonies of the sentiments of the Church of their time. Nor does M. Mallet deny that one ought to believe them on this: he does not challenge them as judges; he

acknowledges their authority is of very great weight; but he claims they are for him. There is nothing to do, then, but to let St. Chrysostom speak, as we have already let the others speak, to judge whether his pretension is reasonable.

In his second Homily on St. Matthew:

> Which of you all, who now hear me, could tell me a Psalm by heart, or any other part of Scripture, if I asked it of him? Not a single one will be found. And what is still more deplorable is that, in this indifference for holy things, you have at the same time an extreme ardour for detestable things, worthy only of demons. For if someone asked you, on the contrary, to tell him some of these infamous songs and these diabolical airs sung on the stage, several would be found who had learned them by heart, and would recite them with pleasure. But how does one excuse such great excesses? 'I am not a Religious or a solitary,' they tell me. 'I have a wife and children, and I am burdened with the care of a household.' This is precisely what ruins everything today: that you believe only Religious ought to read Holy Scripture — whereas this reading is far more necessary to you than to them. For those who are daily exposed to so many combats, and who receive so many wounds there, have much greater need of remedies. It is, then, a still worse thing not to believe one has need of Scripture, and to regard it as superfluous, than not to read it at all. Only the devil can inspire such thoughts. Do you not hear St. Paul, who tells you that all that is written was written for our instruction? And yet you would not so much as touch the Gospel, far from wishing to take the trouble of reading it to penetrate and understand it well. This is what causes everything today to be overturned. If you wish to know how much profit the reading of Holy Scripture would bring you, consider what disposition you are in when you listen to Psalms, or when you hear these diabolical songs; when you are at Church, or when you are at the theatre; and you will be surprised how different your soul is from itself in these encounters, though it is the same soul. The Apostle warns us that evil discourse corrupts good morals. We have, then, continual need, to guard ourselves from this plague, to be charmed, so to speak, by the powerful enchantments of the Spirit of God, which are the divine Scriptures. This is the nourishment of our soul, this is its ornament, this is its safety; and, on the contrary, not to hear the word of God is its end and its death. 'I will send,' says the Lord, 'famine upon the earth; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine and a thirst for the word of God.' Are you not, then, most wretched, to draw upon yourselves voluntarily the very evil God threatens as a great chastisement against those with whom He is angry, and to make your soul suffer a cruel and mortal hunger, which reduces it to the most unhappy state it could be in? For words have a very particular force to carry our soul to good or to evil. A word inflames it with anger, and a word appeases it. A dishonest word excites in it a brutal passion, and a modest and grave word carries it to chastity. If common and ordinary words have this force, why do you make so little account of the words of Scripture? Do you not understand that if the warning a man gives us can do much to correct us, this

must be something else entirely for those God gives us by the grace of the Holy Spirit? For the word of God preserved in the Scriptures is like a fire that inflames the soul of him who hears it, and prepares it for every sort of good.

This Saint then destroys M. Mallet's imagination, which condemns as an abuse and as a profanation of Scripture to let it be read by disordered persons. This is an objection this Father raises against himself in these terms:

> *'But what fruit,' you will tell me, 'will he draw from the word of God, he who hears it and does not practise it?' And I tell you,* he answers, t*hat he will not fail to draw fruit from it: for the application he will have to this divine word will make him often correct himself, feel remorse for his evil state, groan over it, and he may finally come even to wish to accomplish what he has learned there. But what hope can one have that a man will withdraw from his sins, that he will recognize them, and that he will try to correct himself of them, when, in the ignorance in which he is of the word of God, he does not even know that he sins? Let us not, then, neglect to hear the Holy Scriptures read; for it is the devil who turns Christians away from it, because he cannot bear that they should esteem a treasure that can make them rich. It is this enemy of our salvation who persuades them they have no need to instruct themselves in the divine laws written in the sacred Books, from fear that, knowing them, they might observe them. Having, then, understood this malicious artifice of the Demon, let us see to it that the science of the Scriptures serves us as a rampart against his attacks, and that, being clothed in these spiritual arms, we may be sheltered from his blows, and crush his head.*

I leave it to M. Mallet and his approvers to judge from this whether it is God's party, or the demon's, that he has taken, when he shows as much care to turn the common body of the faithful away from the reading of Holy Scripture as this Saint showed in leading them to it.

He enters still further into detail on this in Homily 10 on St. John, and he anticipates all the excuses that laypeople, and even craftsmen, might bring to exempt themselves from reading Holy Scripture:

> *Before,* he says, *I explain to you the words of the Gospel, I ask of you one thing, which I beg you not to refuse me. It is not a very difficult thing, and it is even more advantageous to you than to me. What, then, do I desire of you? That on one of the days of the week, at least on Saturday, you take care to read what I must explain to you of the Gospel; that you repeat it often in your lodging, that you seek out its sense, that you note what you find clear, what appears obscure to you, and where you think there will be something that seems to contradict itself. This will bring us both a great advantage: for I shall have less trouble making you enter into the sense of the Gospel, when, from your own lodging, you will have made it familiar to yourselves, at least as to the terms; and for you, not only will you have more facility and more openness*

to understand the evangelical doctrine, but you will become capable of instructing others in it. For want of this, there are those who try to retain both the words of Scripture and the explanation I give of them, without drawing much fruit from it, though they hear me for years on end. And why? Because they do it negligently, and because it is not to devote enough care to this science of salvation, to give it only the time one is at Church. I know well that several claim they cannot do more, because of the public and private affairs that occupy them; but it is this very thing that condemns them — to be so attached to the affairs of this world that they cannot take time for those that are so necessary to them. And further, this excuse is vain, since they find time enough, amid their occupations, to divert themselves with their friends, to go to the theatre, to see horse races where they often spend whole days. What! When it is a matter of occupying yourselves with these follies, you do not excuse yourselves on the burden of your affairs, and you do not blush to use this excuse, when you are pressed to apply yourselves to the things that are most necessary to you? Do those in this disposition deserve to live and to see the day? There are others of these slothful persons, who say that, for want of books, they cannot read Scripture. It would clearly be ridiculous for wealthy persons to allege this reason. But as I see many poor people who make use of it, I should like to ask them whether their poverty prevents them from having all the tools of their trade. Whence comes it, then, that they take such care, poor as they are, that nothing be lacking of what is necessary to their craft, and that they allege their poverty only when it is a matter of buying books, which would be so useful to them for the salvation of their soul? After all, nonetheless, if there are those so poor that they cannot in any way have Books of Scripture, they will be able to learn it by applying themselves with great attention to the reading that is done of it in Church, and to the explanations given there.

There is yet another Homily on the same Gospel of St. John, the thirty-first, where he treats the same matter with the same zeal:

> Which of us, I ask you, having returned to his house, occupies himself there in a Christian manner? Who takes the trouble to read the books he has at home, and applies himself to discovering the sense of Holy Scripture? Certainly no one would dare say he does so. We would sooner find gaming-boards and dice in most houses. We shall find good books nowhere, or at least among very few people. And those who have them have them as if they did not have them, keeping them always locked away. All their care goes only to having them written on fine parchment and in beautiful characters, not to reading them. So that it is not to seek some usefulness there that they possess them, but to make a show of their riches, so excessive is vainglory. I do not know a single one of these vain persons of the world who understands the books he has. Holy Scripture has not been given to us merely to keep in books, but to engrave deeply in our hearts. This complacency in a useless possession of books would suit rather the vain spirit of the Jews, who contented themselves with having Holy Scripture on tables of stone, as it

had been given to them, than Christians such as we, who ought to have it written on tables of flesh, which are our hearts, just as the Disciples of Our Lord received it by the Holy Spirit at the birth of the Church. I do not speak in this manner to prevent you from having books; on the contrary, I exhort you rather, and I beg you as much as I can, to have them. It is nonetheless on this condition: that you turn over often in your mind the words and thoughts you encounter in Holy Scripture, so that, by this means, your soul may become pure, being filled with the sentiments this divine word must give us. For if the Gospel is in a house, Satan will not dare enter there. And how much more, then, will demons and sin be kept far from a soul that has made Scripture familiar to itself? Sanctify, then, your soul; sanctify your body. This happiness will come to you if you always have the Gospel in your heart and in your mouth. For if dishonest words are capable of corrupting the soul and drawing demons to it, it is evident that a spiritual and holy reading must sanctify the soul, and pour abundantly into it the grace of the Holy Spirit. Holy Scripture is like a voice that would come to us from heaven. Let us prepare our souls, then, to receive from it the remedies they need to be healed of their passions. If we consider attentively the things we read there, we shall apply ourselves to them with great affection. I speak to you always on this, and I shall not cease to speak to you of it.

In his first Sermon on the Epistle to the Romans, which serves as a preface to all the others, he shows the desire he has that everyone should read the divine Epistles of this Apostle — which is precisely what M. Mallet would wish the common body of the faithful never to undertake to read. But it appears clearly that the Church is not of his sentiment, since she has chosen this passage of St. Chrysostom for the lessons of her Office on the second Sunday after Epiphany — which shows well that she approves this great Saint's wish. It will be the Church, then, that we shall be hearing in hearing him:

> *I cannot,* he says, *conceal from you, my brothers, that I am filled with joy to hear here almost continually the Epistles of St. Paul. But my sorrow, amid this joy, is to see that so many people do not know the writings of this holy man as much as they ought. They are so ignorant on this point that they do not even know the number of his Epistles. And this is not because they lack intelligence or light; it is solely because they do not wish always to have in their hands the writings of this blessed Apostle. For as for myself who speak to you, if I understand something in this reading, it is not because I have more intelligence than another; it is because I apply myself to it more, and because I have perhaps a little more affection for this holy Apostle. This is why I am persuaded, my dearest brothers, that if you applied yourselves to this reading yourselves, you would no longer need anyone to discover its depths for you. For the word of Jesus Christ is true: Seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. But because most of those assembled here are burdened with wife and children, and the care of a household, which takes from them the means of giving themselves entirely to this divine occupation, make use, at least, of the labour of others, and show*

as much care to receive what they have drawn from the light of this Apostle, as you show to amass riches. Though there is some shame in desiring only this of you, I would nonetheless be content with it. Grant me this, then, and have for the writings of St. Paul the same ardour you have for money. For I must not conceal from you that it is from the ignorance of the Scriptures that there has come, as from a wretched source, an infinity of evils. It is from there that this multitude of heresies has come, this disorder of morals, this uselessness of so much labour and so many vain and sterile occupations in which Christians engage themselves. A blind man who does not see the light cannot but go astray in walking; and those who do not have their eyes fixed on the light of Scripture, walking as in darkness, necessarily fall into many faults.

He declares himself even further on the obligation laypeople have to read at least the New Testament, in Homily 9 on the Epistle to the Colossians, explaining these words of chapter 3: *Let the word of God dwell in you richly*.

Hear, you who are of the world, and who have a wife and children, how the Apostle commands you to read Holy Scripture — not lightly, nor as a mere formality, but with much affection and care. For just as he who possesses great riches can easily bear losses and injustices, so he who is rich in the dogmas of holy Philosophy can bear not only poverty, but every other calamity, and even with greater ease than the rich of the world can bear the losses that befall them... Consider what this great Apostle's thought is. He did not merely say: Let the word of God be in you; but, that it dwell there richly. Instruct and exhort one another with all wisdom. He calls virtue Wisdom, and with great reason; for humility, and the charity with which one gives alms, and similar virtues, are true wisdom, just as the contrary vices are true folly. Expect no other master than the word of God, which you have in your hands. No man could instruct you as this divine word does. For often he to whom one turns to be instructed hides several things, either from vainglory or from envy. I conjure all those engaged in the life of the world to hear this divine word, and to seek, in the books of which it is composed, remedies for the maladies of their souls. But if, nonetheless, you do not wish to read them all, have at least the New Testament, and take as your perpetual masters the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. If some affliction befalls you, have recourse to these divine books, which contain the most salutary remedies one could desire in the various evils of this life. Go there to draw the consolation you will need in some accident that has befallen you — whether some loss, or some death, or the loss of someone in your family. But you need not apply yourself to discerning the remedies found in these divine books. You need only take all that they present to you, and preserve it in your mind. The ignorance of Holy Scripture is the cause of all our evils. We go to war without arms; how could we avoid perishing there? It is a great happiness to come out of combat safely, being well armed: if, then, we are not, we cannot defend ourselves. Do not burden us with all that concerns your

preservation without wishing to do anything on your part. In truth we are your Pastors, and you are our sheep; but you are not like those animals that have no reason, and cannot defend themselves; for you are reasonable sheep, who must employ your reason to preserve yourselves.

But this Saint has nowhere treated this important point of Christian morality with more care and more extent than in the third of the four sermons he made on that poor man named Lazarus, who was at the door of the wicked rich man:

I warn you, he says, s*ome days beforehand, of the subject I must treat, so that you may seek it in your book, and, having known in general what Scripture says of it, you may be better able to understand what I shall say of it. For I exhort you always, and I shall never cease to exhort you, not to content yourselves with hearing the instructions given here, but to read Holy Scripture assiduously as well, when you are in your homes. I have tried always to inspire this affection in those I have conversed with privately. And let no one allege to me these excuses, so ridiculous, so shameful, and so worthy of condemnation: 'I am engaged in lawsuits; I am occupied in public affairs; I am a craftsman, I must earn my living by my labour; I have a wife, I am burdened with children, I must attend to the care of my family; I am a man of the world, it is not for me to read Holy Scripture, but for those who have renounced the age, who have withdrawn into deserts and to the tops of mountains, and who lead a life suited to their state.' Poor man! What do you tell me? Is it because you are distracted and divided by an infinity of cares that it does not belong to you to read Holy Scripture? On the contrary, it is because of your occupations that it is all the more fitting for you to read it, and that you have even more need of it than those withdrawn from the world to attend to God: for these latter do not have as much need of the help of Holy Scripture as those engaged in many affairs, which torment and trouble them. The Solitaries, being delivered from the affairs and occupations of civil life, having established their dwelling in solitude, having commerce with no one, applying themselves to Christian Philosophy with every sort of rest and tranquility, being as if out of danger on the shore, enjoy great security. But we, who live amid the agitations and tempests of this life, and who are exposed to the necessity of committing an infinity of faults, have an extreme need to be perpetually assisted and sustained by the exhortations and consolations found in Holy Scripture. These men withdrawn from the world are far from combats, and consequently are exempt from receiving various wounds. But you, who find yourselves continually in the peril of combat, do you not have much greater need than they of remedies, since you are often wounded: for your wife causes you impatience and bitterness, and your son gives you sorrow, and your servant angers you, and your enemy sets traps for you, and your friend has jealousy against you, and your neighbour vexes you, and your equal supplants you, and often the Magistrate threatens you, and poverty afflicts you, and the loss of your relatives causes you grief, and prosperity swells you with pride, and*

adversity casts you down. In short, we are surrounded on all sides by various occasions and various necessities — of anger, of troublesome cares, of disturbances, of afflictions, of vainglory, of foolish presumption — and we are like people who would see, on every side, arrows in the air ready to fall upon them. This ought to convince us of the necessity in which we continually are, of taking from Holy Scripture all the arms it furnishes us for our defense. Recognize, as the Wise Man says, that you pass on a road full of snares, and that you walk on the roofs of houses. For carnal desires rise up with more violence against those who live in the world; since the beauty, the adornments, the affectation of the women one meets there, which arrest the eyes, and the discourses so capable of corrupting that one hears there, trouble the reason. Often even soft and effeminate songs put the soul in disorder there, when it was most calm and most tranquil. But what am I saying? One is so weak with regard to objects pleasing to the senses, that a peril appearing much less than those I have just represented can, in an unexpected and quite fleeting encounter, render a man captive. This is what the exquisite perfumes of worldly and dissolute women sometimes do. Behold how our soul is attacked by various perils, where we have need of supernatural and divine remedies, to be healed of the wounds we have already received, and to guard ourselves from those with which we are threatened. Let us, then, drive far from us the flaming darts of Satan, extinguishing them and breaking their force by an assiduous reading of the word of God. For it is not possible — no, it is not possible — that anyone should be saved, without continually reading the sacred Books, which are the work of the Spirit of God. But certainly it is a grace we could never sufficiently esteem, to be able one day to obtain salvation, by the continual use of a remedy as holy and as loveable as the word of God. If we receive wounds every day, and we use no remedy, what hope of salvation can we have?

He then represents to his hearers that, if craftsmen let themselves be reduced to the last poverty rather than sell the tools necessary for earning their living, Christians ought to do the same for the books of Scripture — that they ought to spare nothing to have them, and never part with them — because the writings of the Prophets and Apostles are to a Christian what the anvil and hammer are to a blacksmith, and it is by this that we reform our soul and renew it. He adds that the mere sight of these sacred Books keeps from sinning those who look upon them with respect; and that as soon as someone has touched the Gospel, he regulates his thoughts and his desires. But that if a careful reading is joined to this, the soul, finding itself as in a divine sanctuary, is rendered purer and more perfect, through the converse it has with God in reading His holy word.

M. Mallet will perhaps tell us that this must be understood only of the learned and men of intelligence, who are capable of comprehending what they read in Scripture — but not of the ignorant, the small-minded, women, craftsmen, peasants, poor widows, poor servants, to whom such reading would be more dangerous than useful, because they would understand

nothing of it, and might take amiss what they had read there. Let us see, then, whether what follows in St. Chrysostom can be reconciled with this response:

> *But how, one will say, could we draw from Holy Scripture the utility promised us, if we do not understand it?" This is M. Mallet's objection; and here is what this Saint answers to it: "I answer," he says, "that one does not fail to draw fruit from it, though one does not understand its hidden senses, and that the mere reading of it can contribute much to our sanctification. Besides, it is not possible that one should be equally ignorant of everything one reads there: for the Holy Spirit, who had it written, took care that it should be written in such a manner that publicans, sinners, tent-makers, shepherds, and other rustic people, without study and without letters, could be saved by these books. So that the simplest might not take the difficulty of understanding them as an excuse for not reading them, the things said there are accommodated to the capacity of everyone; so that a craftsman, a servant, a poor woman, and the most ignorant of all men, can profit from this reading. For those whom God deigned to inspire to compose these books by the grace of the Holy Spirit did not make them, as the Pagans did, to draw glory from them, but for the salvation of those who would read them or hear them read. This is why, whereas the Philosophers, the Orators, and other makers of books, who did not know Jesus Christ, considering less what might be useful to others than what might make them admired, left in a certain obscurity, with regard to the simple, what good things they were able to say, the Apostles held an entirely opposite conduct. God having established them as masters of all nations, they designed to expose clearly to all men what they had to teach them, so that each might learn their doctrine by the mere reading of it.*

It appears from what follows that St. Chrysostom attaches himself principally, in speaking thus, to what concerns morals, and that he did not claim Holy Scripture to be so clear everywhere that the common body of the faithful would not often need someone to make it understood: *"For who,"* he says, *"reading in the Gospel: Blessed are the meek; blessed are the merciful and charitable; blessed are the pure in heart, and other similar things, believes he needs a master to comprehend them? Everyone can also understand, without much difficulty, the prodigies, the miracles, and the histories. It is, then, a vain pretext and a false excuse, to justify one's negligence and laziness, to allege the obscurity of Scripture to exempt oneself from reading it. You complain of not understanding what is in these sacred Books. And how would you understand them, not wishing even to give yourself the trouble of casting your eyes upon them? Take, then, the Bible, read all its histories, and, taking care to retain what you have understood, pass several times over what you find obscure there. If, after having read it with much care, you cannot discover its meaning, have recourse to one more skilled than you. Seek a master who will instruct you; confer with him on what you desire to understand, showing him a great passion to be instructed in it. And if God sees you have so much zeal to understand His word, He will not despise your vigilance and your care. And even, should it happen that you cannot find anyone to give you the understanding*

of what you seek, He will give it to you Himself. Remember the Eunuch of the Queen of Ethiopia. He was a barbarian, overwhelmed with cares and affairs, and who did not understand what he read. He did not cease, nonetheless, to read in his chariot. Judge from this what assiduity he might have had in reading Holy Scripture in his house, being so applied to it during the course of a journey; and if he did not cease reading, though he did not understand what he read, doubtless he abandoned his reading still less after the instruction he received. Now that he did not understand what he read appears from the question the Deacon Philip put to him: Do you understand well what you read? And from the Eunuch's answer, who had no shame in confessing his ignorance, saying: How could I understand it, if someone does not explain it to me? He did not cease to read, having no one with him to instruct him; but his zeal made him merit that God should send him a master. And if you cannot promise yourself to have thus, near you, a man sent miraculously, are you not assured of the presence and assistance of the same Spirit that had moved this holy Deacon to come find him? I conjure you, then, my dearest brothers, not to neglect your salvation. All that has been written was written to serve as instruction for us, who find ourselves at the end of the ages. The reading of Holy Scripture is a powerful rampart against sin; and it is a great precipice, and a profound abyss, to be ignorant of Scripture. It is to renounce one's salvation to wish to know nothing of the divine laws. This is what has produced heresies. This is what has caused the corruption of morals. This is what has overturned everything: for it cannot be — no, I assure you, it cannot be — that a man who reads continually and attentively Scripture should not draw much fruit from it."

Chapter X Examination of What Certain Learned Men Have Said Concerning These Passages of St. John Chrysostom. And First, of What Cardinal Bellarmine Has Said of Them

These passages of St. Chrysostom are so common, and so thoroughly ruin this false pretension — that the Fathers regarded it as an abuse to permit indiscriminately to everyone the reading of Holy Scripture — that it is a strange bad faith in an Author who makes a book expressly on this matter to have concealed them, and not to have at least proposed them to himself as an objection which he was obliged to satisfy. But what else could M. Mallet have done, in the commitment he had entered into, and having as his aim to deceive the simple, rather than to write for the learned? Ought one to be surprised that he found it more advantageous not to speak of them at all, than to undertake to answer them — which would have been absolutely impossible for him?

For there are here two questions: the one, whether the Fathers permitted indiscriminately to everyone the reading of Holy Scripture; the other, whether they did well to permit it, or rather whether they had reasons for permitting it that are not suited to the present time. The one is a question of fact, the other of right; and M. Mallet has not reduced himself to this latter, but has stopped at the former, and maintained that the Fathers regarded as an abuse this general permission to read Scripture. Now though these passages of St. Chrysostom, and those of the other Fathers I have reported, might leave some room to quibble on the question of right, it is clear they can leave none on that of fact; and consequently M. Mallet must pass for the most ignorant of all Theologians, if he did not know what the Holy Fathers wrote on this matter, or for the boldest liar there ever was, if, having known it, he did not fail to maintain the contrary.

There is, then, nothing more to say to M. Mallet; and what I shall add here does not concern him. But I believe I ought to examine what learned men have said concerning these passages, which had been objected to them on the occasion of the rule of the Index, which forbids reading the Bible in the vernacular tongue without a permission in writing.

Cardinal Bellarmine proposes to himself this objection (*De Verbo Dei*, Book II, chapter 16): St. Chrysostom often exhorts the Laity to read Holy Scripture; it is therefore fitting to leave the versions of the Bible in the vernacular tongue in everyone's hands. And here is the reply he makes to it:

> *I answer,* he says, t*hat one must understand what this Saint says in his Sermons according to his intention, and in conformity with the occasions that made him speak. Because, then, men in that time loved comedy, spectacles, and other similar follies, and never read the Holy Scriptures — not even those who were capable of it — this is why St. Chrysostom, wishing to draw them from this negligence, exhorted them continually to read Scripture, not that he wished even those who were altogether ignorant to read it, but so that it might at least be read by those who could read it with profit. For he knew he was dealing with people who had need of these*

amplifications. And the proof Bellarmine brings, to show that what this Saint says on this matter is hyperbolical and not exactly true, is that he asserts, in his third sermon on Lazarus, that it is not possible to be saved except by continually reading the Sacred Books. For who does not see, says this Cardinal, *that this is very false, taking it literally, since if this were so, none of those who do not know how to read could be saved? It is, then, a hyperbolical and improper manner of speaking.*

We agree that what St. Chrysostom says — that one cannot be saved unless one reads Scripture — must not be taken in a metaphysical rigour; and it would certainly be to do injury to this Saint to take it in that manner. There is a moral generality, with which one must content oneself in moral matters, and it would be quibbling to demand a greater one. All the sentences of the Proverbs of Solomon are very true, since they were dictated by the Holy Spirit. And yet there are several that are true only in this manner — because those of whom the Wise Man speaks are ordinarily such as he depicts them, though this is not always so. St. Paul, having reported this verse of a Greek Poet — *The Cretans are always liars; they are wicked beasts who love only to eat and to do nothing* — says that this testimony is true, because these were the ordinary vices of the inhabitants of that island, though apparently not all were such. Men are also accustomed, in this kind of discourse, to take the word "impossible" for what is very difficult, and what scarcely happens in the ordinary course of things. *It is impossible*, says St. Paul (Heb. 6:4), *that those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, etc., and after that have fallen away, should be renewed again unto repentance.* Several learned Interpreters believe these words do not mean that this is absolutely impossible, but only that this is very difficult, and rarely happens.

If Cardinal Bellarmine means only this — as indeed he says no more — one has nothing to complain of; and it would only be a dispute over words to find it wrong that he called these manners of speaking of St. Chrysostom, which have their truth when properly understood, amplifications and hyperboles. For one would be greatly mistaken to take for false everything that is hyperbolical. One could not maintain this without blasphemy, since there are hyperboles even in Scripture itself, where there is certainly nothing but what is true — as what is said in the third Book of Kings 10:25, that Solomon made silver as common as stones, and what St. John says at the end of his Gospel: that Jesus did so many other things that, if they were reported in detail, he did not believe the world could contain the books that would be written of them. Hyperbole, when it remains within its just bounds, is not the extinction of truth; it is only its extension. It is like those glasses that magnify objects without changing them. They are as one sees them, though they appear larger, and this very thing makes them better known than if one saw them only in their natural size.

Let us see, then, to what these discourses of St. Chrysostom reduce themselves, and what they contain that is exactly true, by this Cardinal's own admission. He acknowledges that this Saint was right to recommend the reading of Holy Scripture, and even to use amplifications to draw his hearers to it the more; because they had become greatly attached to comedy and to

spectacles, and to other similar follies; and because even those who would have been capable of reading Scripture did not read it. But what can one conclude from this, except that we still have today the same obligation St. John Chrysostom had, to lead people of the world to read Holy Scripture — since the passion for comedies and spectacles, as well as the licence of singing the airs this Father calls diabolical, is greater than it ever was, and those who would be capable of reading Holy Scripture are no less negligent in doing so than they were then — unless it be that, for some years now, the version of the New Testament of Mons has led several persons to read it who did not read it before? To which, if one adds a new poison, which did not exist in St. Chrysostom's time, or was not common, since he makes no complaint of it — namely, the reading of Novels, which corrupts the mind of most young people, which causes disorders in girls and women that cannot be told, and which is the thing in the world most capable of extinguishing, in those who apply themselves to it, all spirit of devotion and piety — one will judge without difficulty that one cannot approve what St. Chrysostom did in the circumstances of the time in which he lived, without also approving that the same be done today; since the same evils, and even greater ones, oblige us to apply the same remedies.

One may also grant this Cardinal, that when St. Chrysostom exhorted everyone to read Holy Scripture, his aim was that at least those should do so who could do it with profit: *ut ii saltem id facerent qui cum fructu poterant*. But one must at the same time recognize, in good faith, that he judged capable of reading Scripture with profit, not only Ecclesiastics and Religious, but also secular persons and people of the world; not only the rich, who are ordinarily better educated, the learned and the great minds, but also the poor, the ignorant, and the simplest — down to craftsmen, peasants, servants, poor widows. For he does not content himself with exhorting everyone generally to read Holy Scripture (which one might take for an amplification one was extending too far), but we have seen that he goes so far as to name in particular the persons I have just marked. Now when this is so, one can no longer have recourse to a figure of Rhetoric, to make an Author believed not to have wished to say what he said in express terms.

I could add, to justify what I have said touching the true sense in which one must take St. Chrysostom's words, what the Bishop of Castorie also says of it, in his excellent book on the reading of Holy Scripture, chapter 10, where he shows that this reading is not absolutely necessary for salvation, but that it is very useful to it. But for fear of being too long, I prefer to refer to it, and I shall be well pleased if this be an occasion to read so holy, so judicious, and so solid a work — which shows, with such great light, that it is only Catholics who can read Holy Scripture with profit, and that, being read with the spirit Protestants wish it to be read, without submission to the Church, which is its true interpreter, it can only blind them and cast them into error.

Chapter XI Examination of What Cardinal du Perron Has Said Concerning the Sentiment of the Fathers Regarding the Reading of Holy Scripture

This learned Cardinal's *Reply* not having been printed until after his death, as I have already said elsewhere, there remain various things he would apparently have changed, had he had leisure to review it; and there is reason to believe he would have left nothing of all he says in the fifth chapter of the sixth book, to explain the sentiments of the Fathers touching the reading of Holy Scripture. For he does four things there, all equally ill-founded and manifestly false.

The first is that he takes as the foundation of this whole discourse, that the Fathers are divided on this subject — some having exhorted their hearers to read Holy Scripture, and others, on the contrary, having complained that it was read too universally and indiscriminately. And this is what led him to give this chapter the title: *Of the occasions for which some of the Fathers exhorted everyone to read Holy Scripture, and others, on the contrary, complained of it*.

The second is that, reasoning upon this false hypothesis, he says these were local and temporal occasions — and consequently subject to the variety of times and places — that gave the Holy Fathers cause to make, on this matter, exhortations contrary to one another, without there being falsehood in either the one or the other.

The third is that he gives St. Jerome as an example of those among the Fathers who, he claims, complained that Christians read Holy Scripture too universally and indiscriminately. And the reason he says he had for this is that he saw that in Italy, the ease of the Latin language, which was still there almost vernacular, made the reading of the Bible accessible to everyone.

The fourth is that he gives only St. Chrysostom as an example of those who exhorted everyone to read Holy Scripture — which he claims this Saint did because he had to deal with hearers learned in the letters of human Philosophy.

This is all this chapter contains, where it is easy to show there is wit and skill, but no solidity whatsoever. This is what one will readily recognize through the examination of each of these four points.

1°. It seems this Cardinal, reserving to himself the task of seeking in the Fathers what he had not yet found there, wished to practise in the meantime what Horace says in praise of Homer — that he carried his hearer into the midst of the events he recounts in his poems, as if they had already been known to him: *In medias res, non secus ac notas auditorem rapit*. For instead of proving that the Fathers are divided on the reading of Holy Scripture, by opposing to those who exhort everyone to read it several others who would have complained that it was

read too universally and indiscriminately, he pretends that his Reader is already persuaded of this, and that he is troubled only to know what caused the Fathers to find themselves in this contrariety of sentiments. It is by this supposition that he begins his chapter. *The occasions*, he says, *by which the Fathers sometimes exhorted their hearers to the reading of Scripture, and sometimes complained that Christians read the Scriptures too universally and indiscriminately, were local and temporal occasions.*

This is how one speaks of things acknowledged by everyone to be certain. One supposes them, and seeks the reason for them. But one seeks in vain the reason for what does not exist. Now it is not true that the Fathers are divided on this question — whether it is fitting that every sort of person, learned and ignorant, men and women, should read Holy Scripture. It is not true that some exhorted everyone to read it, while others, on the contrary, found it wrong that everyone should read it. This latter supposition is without any foundation. It is said into thin air, and cannot be proven. All the Fathers generally have found it good that every sort of person, without distinction of age or sex, of low or elevated condition, of simplicity or skill, should read the Holy Scriptures, and principally the New Testament. And one could not allege a single one — I say a single one — who was of a contrary opinion, and who testified, for example, that he did not approve that the ignorant and women should read the Gospel and the writings of the Apostles. This Cardinal had doubtless not examined this question thoroughly when he treated it toward the end of his *Reply*. He had read this in other Controversialists; and, supposing it until he had verified it, he stopped at seeking plausible reasons for a pretended contrariety, which has no foundation in truth.

2°. *These were,* he says, *local and temporal occasions, which caused the Fathers to say, some one thing on this matter, and others the contrary.* One is not troubled to know what caused the Fathers to say that every sort of person ought to read Holy Scripture. They have made sufficiently understood that it is the great utility that comes to Christians from this reading; that it is the need they have to strengthen their faith, and to nourish their piety by these words of life; that it is the commandment God made to the Jews, to meditate upon His law, which concerns still more the children of the free woman; that it is because Holy Scripture, being a letter from Almighty God, which He has had the goodness to address to His creature, it ought to be very shameful to us to neglect reading it, since if we had received one from a King of the earth, we would have no rest until we had known what this King had sent word to us. These are the reasons the Fathers bring to exhort the faithful to read Holy Scripture. But one does not see that they are either local or temporal; and one sees manifestly, on the contrary, that they encompass all places and all times.

As for the reasons of those among the Fathers who would have testified that they did not find it good that simple believers, the ignorant and women, should read these sacred Books, I do not know them; for I know of none who did so. But I find no other in Cardinal du Perron than the one he applies to St. Jerome — which is, that he saw that in Italy, the ease of the Latin language, which was still there almost vernacular, made the reading of the Bible accessible to

everyone. This is what he says was the cause that St. Jerome complains that everyone indiscriminately read it. But true or not, can one say this reason was a local and temporal occasion with regard to St. Jerome, compared with all the other Fathers, who exhorted everyone to read Scripture? Can one say this was suited to the place where St. Jerome was, and to the time in which he wrote, and that this was not suited to the places where the other Fathers were, nor to the time in which they lived? One cannot say this of the time, since it concerns principally the Fathers who lived at the same time as St. Jerome. And one can as little say it of the place.

For, **1°**, St. Jerome spent the greater part of his life in the East, and was but a short time at Rome and in Italy. Why then would one wish that he had Italy in view in a letter he wrote while in Syria?

2°. The Latin language, says this Cardinal, was still almost vernacular in Italy. What does "almost vernacular" mean? Was the Latin language not then absolutely and entirely vernacular in Italy? Would this "almost" have remained, had he reviewed his work?

3°. The Latin language, being vernacular (or almost vernacular) in Italy, made the reading of the Bible accessible to everyone. And was it not the same thing in the other countries where all the other Fathers of that time lived? Was not the Latin language vernacular also in the Gauls, in Spain, in Dalmatia, in Africa? This has been proven against this same Cardinal, in the second Book, in so convincing a manner that one may be well assured no one will undertake to maintain the contrary. But what is surprising is that it is in opposing St. Chrysostom to St. Jerome that this Cardinal proposes, as particular to St. Jerome, that the Latin language, being vernacular in Italy, made the reading of the Bible there accessible to everyone. For after having brought a local reason, which he claims caused St. Chrysostom to exhort everyone to read Holy Scripture, he adds: *St. Jerome, on the contrary* — which must indicate that the other reason he was about to bring was local to St. Jerome, and did not suit St. Chrysostom. And yet there is nothing further from all likelihood. For was the Greek language less vernacular at Antioch and at Constantinople than Latin in Italy? It is quite certain it was not. It is therefore also certain that the ease of the Greek language made the reading of the Bible just as accessible to everyone in all the Eastern Churches, where the Greek Fathers lived, as that of the Latin language made it accessible to everyone, not only in Italy, but in all the Western Churches, where the Latin Fathers lived. It would not, then, have been a local reason particular to St. Jerome, and which St. Chrysostom and all the other Greek and Latin Fathers would not have had as well, that would have led St. Jerome to complain that everyone wished to read Scripture. So that all the Fathers generally, Greek, Latin, Syrian, would have had to make the same complaint, since they all had the same reason for it — Holy Scripture being certainly, in that time, in each of the countries where they wrote and preached, as accessible as in Italy to the reading of everyone. But let us see whether St. Jerome made the complaint attributed to him.

3°. I have already remarked that Cardinal du Perron, having said in general that some of the Fathers exhorted everyone to read Scripture, and others, on the contrary, complained of it, had reported, as an example of those he claimed to have complained of it, only St. Jerome alone, whom he cites in his Preface on Joshua, where he says that he complains that everyone indiscriminately read Holy Scripture, and attributed to themselves the prerogative of understanding and interpreting it. But there is not a single word of this in his Preface on Joshua — which shows well that this book would not be as it is, had he reviewed it. For what he reports of it is only what follows: *Quae sunt medicorum promittunt medici, tractant fabrilia fabri, sola Scripturarum ars, etc.* Now this is exactly the very passage alleged by M. Mallet from the letter to St. Paulinus, where it is not true that St. Jerome complains that everyone indiscriminately read Scripture. This will not be found in any manner in this letter, any more than in any other place of St. Jerome. I have already shown this in chapter 7. And I have shown in chapter 9 that this Saint is the least fitting of all the Fathers to be alleged as not having found it good that every sort of person should read Holy Scripture — he who had it read not only by women, but by girls from their most tender youth. It must therefore remain constant that this Cardinal, who had read the Fathers so much, could not find a single passage in all of antiquity by which he could verify what he had advanced in general, and supposed as indubitable: that if there were Fathers who exhorted everyone to read Holy Scripture, there were others who found it wrong that everyone should read it.

4°. There remains only to examine what he says of the Fathers he acknowledges to have exhorted everyone to read Holy Scripture, and how he will find that they did so only for local and temporal occasions. To arrive at this more easily, he reduces them to St. Chrysostom — which is not reasonable, unless it were clear that these pretended local reasons, which led this Father to exhort every sort of person to read the sacred Books, were common to him with all the other Fathers, who did so just as expressly as he, though they did not do so as often, nor with as much force, nor with as much extent. Let us hear, then, what this local reason is. *"It is,"* he says, *"that St. Chrysostom, having to deal with hearers learned in the letters of human Philosophy, and versed in the reading of Plato and profane Philosophers, and principally since he was at Constantinople, seat of the Empire, where his hearers were courtiers and men of State, and nonetheless newly converted from paganism to the Christian Religion; and on this occasion, fearing that the reading of the books of the profane Philosophers, where they drew the rules of moral life and Philosophy, might lead them back, through the pleasure of these studies, to paganism, whence they had newly come out, he dissuades them, as much as he can, from the handling of these books to learn moral Philosophy there, and the precepts of human life, and invites them to seek the instruction of morals and Ethical Philosophy within Scripture."*

This has a little more colour than the local reason he had attributed to St. Jerome, in supposing, against the truth, that he had found it wrong that everyone should read Scripture; but it has no more foundation. For if it was the fear that the reading of the profane Philosophers might lead the Christians of Constantinople, newly converted, back to paganism,

that led him to press them, with such insistence, to read Holy Scripture, he would have testified something of this in the many places where he recommends this reading with such zeal. And as we have just reported the greater part of these passages, we have already seen that he says not a single word of it; and that if he so often exhorts his hearers to read Scripture, it is by testifying that he fears — not that they might become pagans again, which was very rare in that time (no one being able to do so without exposing himself to great penalties, ordained against Apostates by a law of Theodosius) — but that they might remain, all their lives, bad Christians, which was very common. Nor does one see that it is in dissuading them from reading the profane Philosophers, to learn there the precepts of human life, that he invites them to seek rather in Scripture the instruction of morals and of Ethical Philosophy. These are ingenious thoughts, but which have no solidity. One need only reread the excellent passages of this Father that we have reported, to be persuaded of this. For, inviting as he does every sort of person, and even the simplest and most ignorant, down to peasants, servants, and poor widows, to read at least the New Testament — was this to turn them away from reading the pagan Philosophers? This would have been a pleasant apprehension. But he was in no danger of having it; and he says nothing else of these profane Philosophers, in treating this matter, except that, having written only for glory and to make themselves admired, their works are not fit for the simple — whereas the Canonical Writers, having been established by God as the Doctors of all men, so proportioned what they wrote to the capacity of each, that the simplest and most ignorant can draw much fruit from the reading of their books.

Let us add to this, that for this local reason to have been reasonably alleged by this Cardinal, it would have had to be, as I have already remarked, one that could be applied to all the other Fathers, who, as well as St. Chrysostom, led everyone to read Holy Scripture. Now will one imagine that when Pope St. Gregory did this at Rome, St. Augustine in Africa, St. Jerome in Syria, St. Ambrose at Milan, Cassian at Marseille, St. Basil in Cappadocia, St. Hilary at Poitiers, they all had in view these pagans newly converted, and all feared that the pleasure of reading the pagan Philosophers might lead them back to paganism? I am assured this Cardinal would never have dared to say so. And yet what he said of St. Chrysostom, even had it some plausibility, could serve him nothing to sustain his thesis, which must be general, if he could not say as much of all the other Fathers, who were on this matter of the same sentiment as St. Chrysostom.

All this makes me believe that, if Father Amelotte had considered all these things with more attention, he would not have let himself be dazzled by this thought, and he would have found it no more solid for being dressed in these mysterious terms: *that there are conjunctures where the Church even excites the faithful to celebrate often this sacred banquet* (that is, to read Scripture often), *knowing that, according to St. Paul, the feast of the immolation of our Paschal Lamb is perpetual. But that it is when she sees them avid for the leaven of the Sciences of Egypt and Athens, as were those of Constantinople in the time of St. John Chrysostom*. It is very true, and Father Amelotte is right to acknowledge it as he does in this

preface, that the Church, in the time of the Holy Fathers, excited the faithful to read Scripture often. But it is not true that this was to turn them away from reading the profane Philosophers — which he calls the leaven of the Sciences of Egypt and Athens. And nothing is more ill-founded than to attribute to St. Chrysostom, that he pressed his hearers so much to read these divine books in their homes (which Father Amelotte calls celebrating in each family the immolation of the Lamb), only because he saw them avid for this leaven of human Philosophy. It would have been to esteem this divine reading very little, to counsel it only by accident, and to prevent dangerous readings. God forbid that he should have had so base a thought of what St. Paul (Rom. 15:4) assures us was written for our instruction, so that we might conceive a firm hope through the patience and consolation these Holy Letters give us, and of what he says in another place (2 Tim. 3:16), that it is useful to lead to piety and justice, so that the man of God may be perfect, and perfectly disposed to every sort of good work. But one has only too clearly seen, by the passages we have reported of this Father, that he had quite another idea of it, and that it was these essential advantages, which he had learned from the Apostle, that one draws from this reading, that led him to exhort everyone to it — the most ignorant as well as those one could least suspect of being avid for the leaven of the Sciences of Egypt and Athens, no less than those he might have believed attached to these sciences.

After all this, nonetheless, were one to imagine — which does not appear from his works — that this consideration of turning his hearers away from reading the profane Philosophers had been one of the reasons that led him to recommend so much the reading of Scripture, why would one wish that it should no longer hold today? Are we not led to occupy ourselves with sciences that can contribute as much to stifling the spirit of piety and prayer, when one applies oneself to them too much, as the reading of the pagan Philosophers could do then? Are there not today an infinity of books more dangerous for corrupting morals than those of these Philosophers, which, being read with a Christian spirit, could serve the faithful to make them re-enter into themselves, giving them cause to blush that they did less for God, being instructed by Jesus Christ, than what these pagans wished one to do from the sole view of a human honesty? Is there not, finally, as much reason to lead so many girls and so many women to abandon their wretched Novels, which render them worse than pagan women, so as to apply themselves to reading the Gospel, as one imagines St. Chrysostom had to exhort those who read the profane Philosophers, who taught nothing but what was honest, to change this reading for that of Holy Scripture?

Let us conclude, then, that one cannot show that the reasons St. Chrysostom had, as well as the other Fathers, for exhorting Christians to read Holy Scripture, were local and temporal — that is, that they suited only the places where they preached, and the time in which they lived: whence it follows that if they were good in their mouths at that time, they must still be so today, in the mouths of all Christian Preachers.

Chapter XII Examination of M. Mallet's Conclusion. Two Dispositions for Profiting from Holy Scripture. That the First Is to Be Instructed by the Church in the Truths of the Faith

M. Mallet is accustomed to make, at the end of each matter he treats, a recapitulation with the title *Conclusion* — which ordinarily represents fairly faithfully what he wished to establish. He does this also at the end of this chapter, on page 210; but with little fidelity. For having committed himself, at the entry of the chapter, to prove that the Holy Fathers disapproved of, and regarded as an abuse, the general permission to read Holy Scripture in whatever language it might be, instead of saying at the end that the authorities he has brought in this chapter show this, he says only that they show that the common doctrine of the Fathers is that the reading of Scripture is not useful to everyone, and that, on the contrary, it can be harmful to certain ill-disposed minds who might abuse it.

One sees clearly enough how different this is from what he had obliged himself to establish by the Holy Fathers. And one sees it even by what he adds: that, so as not to rely solely on the authority of the Fathers, though it ought to be of very great weight, one cannot doubt that their reason, which is founded upon the danger there is in this reading, is very convincing. For the reason by which one proves a thing cannot be the very thing one wishes to prove. Now the reason of the Fathers, according to M. Mallet, is the danger there is in this reading — which is the same thing as saying that it is not useful to everyone, and that, on the contrary, it can be harmful to certain ill-disposed minds who might abuse it. This, then, is not what he wished to establish by the Fathers, but what he had at first proposed — namely, that they took this reason, that it can be harmful to certain ill-disposed minds, as a convincing reason not to let it be read indiscriminately by every sort of person. Now this is what he has in no way proven, and what he will never prove; and all that he says thereafter in this Conclusion is only a continual illusion.

For he continually makes this argument, and falsely supposes that the Fathers made it as he does. The reading of Holy Scripture can be harmful to certain ill-disposed minds who might abuse it. It is therefore an abuse, acknowledged by the Holy Fathers, to wish to place it indiscriminately in everyone's hands, and to let it be read by the ignorant as well as by the learned, by women as well as by great minds, and by disordered persons as well as by the wisest?

Now what does M. Mallet do? Instead of proving the consequence, which alone is in dispute, he amuses the world and deceives the simple by proving the antecedent, which no one has any thought of contesting — since it is a truth of faith, attested by St. Peter, who assures us that there are ignorant men, weak in the faith, who twist the Scriptures to a bad sense, and who abuse them to their own ruin. This is on which he uselessly employs five pages, reporting what Tertullian says — that Scripture was conceived in ambiguous terms, to give occasion for heresies; that various heretics have founded their heresies on badly understood passages of

Scripture; that there have been, in recent times, those who took occasion from it to throw themselves into abominable excesses; and that a German Painter, having read the history of the daughters of Lot, abandoned himself to horrible incests. One sees clearly enough that all this proves nothing else, except that one can abuse the reading of Holy Scripture. And who has ever doubted it? Therefore, he concludes, it is an abuse to let it be read by women and by the ignorant, and by all those who know only the language they learned from their nurses. This is the sole point at issue. This is what M. Mallet maintains. This, then, is what he ought to have proven, and what he proves in no manner whatsoever. This is what he ought to have found in the Fathers, and what he has found there so little that he would have seen the contrary in a hundred places, had he consulted them.

So that one may not let oneself be deceived by M. Mallet's sophisms, which prove what is not in question, instead of proving what is the whole subject of the dispute, I maintain two things against him.

The first: that all the Fathers acknowledged what they had learned from St. Peter — that the reading of the sacred Books can be harmful to ill-disposed minds who might abuse it. But that none, without exception, concluded from this that the reading of the New Testament (for it is principally of this that we are speaking) ought not ordinarily to be permitted to the ignorant, to women, to simple minds, to craftsmen, to peasants, and generally to all those who know only the language they learned from their nurses.

The second: that they were in no danger of holding this thought — that this reading was less fitting and less useful for the salvation of those I have just named than for men, for the learned, and for great minds; but that, according to the principles they had laid down, they had to believe, and did in fact believe, that the former are ordinarily less in danger of abusing it than the latter — because the dispositions necessary to read the Gospel and the writings of the Apostles with profit are found more often in women and in simple persons than in men and in the learned.

For these dispositions may be reduced to two. The first is instruction in the most common truths of the faith, which one ought to have learned from the Church, along with the persuasion — which the authority of that same Church ought to have given us — that these Scriptures, called holy, are divine books, which contain nothing but what is true, and which, consequently, cannot fail to conform to the articles of faith of which one is already instructed. And the second is purity of heart, which opens the eyes of the soul to discover there many truths that, without this, would remain hidden from us, and which is still more necessary to lead us to love them and to practise them.

I find these two points treated in so solid a manner, and so full of unction, in the book of the Bishop of Castorie, of whom I have spoken several times, that, holding it an honour to walk in the footsteps of this learned and pious Prelate, I believe I ought to report here a part of what he says of it, in his fifteenth chapter, which bears the title: *That Holy Scripture, to be well*

understood, requires a Reader who is imbued with the truths of the faith; and that purity of heart, which one acquires through the exercise of mortification and prayer, is a very useful commentary on Scripture.

He proves the first of these two points by a very judicious consideration, which shows very well, against the heretics, that it is by Tradition and by the instruction of the Church, rather than by Scripture, that those who are not yet faithful ought to learn the truths of the faith. It is that all the Canonical Scriptures of the New Testament were addressed to the faithful, and not to unbelievers; to persons instructed in Jesus Christ, and not to persons who had never heard tell of Him. Having proven this both from the Epistles of the Apostles and from the Gospels, here is the conclusion he draws from it:

> *Since it is constant, in part by the writings of the Apostles, and in part by Ecclesiastical History, that the books of the New Testament were written for readers who, being already instructed in Jesus Christ, would read them with the lights of faith, and would be able to discern and penetrate the doctrine of the Apostles, written in these divine books, by the help of this same doctrine already living and luminous in their hearts — one cannot doubt that the Apostles accommodated their manner of writing to the capacity of those for whom they wrote, who were already instructed in Jesus Christ and His mysteries. If, then, one wishes to read with profit this part of Holy Scripture that the Apostles have written, one needs beforehand to be instructed by the Apostolic Church, so that, after having received from her the doctrine of salvation, one may be disposed to read usefully what the Apostles have written. One ought, in this, to imitate the first Christians of Rome, of Corinth, of Ephesus, and of other places, who were faithful before reading the Epistles the Apostles addressed to them, and who had in their hearts the apostolic doctrine before reading it in books. Now if the books of the New Testament ought not to be read by unbelievers, to learn there the doctrine of the faith, but only by the faithful, to confirm themselves and make progress in the faith by this holy reading, it is without doubt that the books of the Old Testament demand still more a faithful and instructed Reader, because the Old Testament is less intelligible than the New, in which it is explained, and because the veil that covers the heart of the unbelievers who read Moses and the Prophets is not removed from them, except after they are converted to Jesus Christ by faith, as St. Paul teaches us.*

This foundation laid, here is how this Bishop continues to show that the faith we ought first to learn from the Church is the first disposition for reading Holy Scripture with profit.

> *To read,* he says, a*nd understand the books of the Philosophers, one needs the lights of reason and of the mind; and to read with piety and with profit the holy Books, one needs the lights of faith. The strength and the natural light of the mind is the key to the books of the Philosophers; the strength and the supernatural light of faith is the key to the books of Holy Scripture. He who is imbued with the Catholic faith is*

assured of being unable to learn anything from Holy Scripture that is contrary to Catholic doctrine. So that although he does not know how one ought to understand Scripture, he knows well nonetheless how one ought not to understand it. And although he does not see in particular what doctrine is contained in each proposition, he knows nonetheless in general that it contains nothing but a truth that must be adored. The unbelieving Capernaites hear along with St. Peter these words of Our Lord: If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall have no life in you. These unbelievers, taking these words in a bad sense, said, in abandoning Jesus Christ: These words are very hard; who can listen to them? St. Peter, on the contrary, being faithful, though he did not understand the sense of these words of Our Lord, did not fail to revere them as words of eternal life. This appears in that, as soon as Jesus Christ had asked him: And you, do you also wish to leave me? — he answered Him with a profound and religious respect: To whom shall we go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life. St. Peter did not understand, says St. Augustine on Psalm 54, these words of Jesus Christ; but his faith and his piety made him believe they were good, though he did not understand them. If, then, the discourse of Jesus Christ seems hard, not yet being understood, it is to the unbeliever and the impious that it is hard. But your piety and your faith ought to remove for you its apparent hardness. It will become sweet and loveable to you, and will have an unction that will penetrate your soul.... You are like a child. You do not yet understand the mysteries and the secrets that are in the words of the Saviour. You are perhaps like a child for whom the bread must be hidden, and who can as yet be nourished only with milk. Do not fall into bad humour against the breasts that nourish you. They will render you, little by little, capable of the solid nourishment that is not yet proper for you.

One must note, in these words of St. Augustine, that Holy Scripture, according to this Father, is not only the bread and solid meat of the perfect, but also the milk of the little ones and of beginners. For it is to these that he gives this counsel — not to fall into bad humour against the breasts that nourish them, that is, against Holy Scripture that they read, because in many places it contains truths they are not yet capable of penetrating. And this is what the Author from whom I have drawn this discourse continues to explain in a very holy manner, which shows us well that women and other simple persons, provided they have the faith, can draw very great profit from the reading of Holy Scripture, though they encounter there several things they cannot understand. The same thing had been represented, and by fairly similar views, in the Preface to the New Testament of Mons. But M. Mallet will apparently be more disposed to yield to the sentiments of a Bishop for whom he ought to have veneration, and who cannot be suspect to him.

The effect and the virtue of faith, then, is to make us revere truth as much in the places where it is hidden from us as in the places where it is discovered to us. The faith with which Mary's heart was filled made her adore Jesus Christ, hidden in her womb, no

less than if she had had Him before her eyes. Faith puts true believers in a state to adore Jesus Christ, hidden in the Eucharist, as they would adore Him if He presented Himself visibly to them. And thus the proper virtue of faith is to make those who read Holy Scripture with true piety adore no less the truth that speaks there, when they do not yet know what it says, than when they understand it. It is nonetheless with this difference: that the light of truth, which is manifest to them, fills them with joy and leads them to praise the mercy of God; and that, in the encounter with the adorable obscurities of His word, they are touched with a religious fear, and a salutary dread of the judgments of God, being ready to cry out with St. Augustine, Confessions Book 12, chapter 14: How admirable is the depth of your Scriptures! Their surface, as if to draw us to read them, presents itself agreeably to us, who are but children as regards their understanding. But their depth, my God, is altogether marvellous! I cannot consider it except with dread — but a dread of respect, and a trembling of love.

This Prelate then shows, by very fine examples, in what manner the truths of the faith we have been instructed in by the Church unfold for us the truths hidden in certain manners of speaking in Scripture, which, without this, might deceive us.

Those, he says, *who have learned by the Catholic faith that God is justice, wisdom, truth; that He does not occupy a certain space, as material substances do; that He is subject to no change, but is perfectly immutable, and always equal to Himself — seeing that Scripture says He walks, that He rests after His labour, that He descends from heaven, that He awakens, that He forgets, that He grows angry, that He is touched with compassion, and that His holy word thus attributes to Him various changes and human passions — do not for that represent to themselves anything corporeal or changing in God; but are persuaded that eternal Wisdom has wished to employ these manners of speaking, which are figurative and have some appearance of defect, so as to accommodate itself to our manner of conceiving, and to nourish and increase our faith; treating us as children to whom one must speak a language they can understand. But after Jesus Christ has illumined their hearts with a stronger and more complete faith, so that they are capable of understanding in a spiritual sense the figurative expressions, these are no longer for them, as St. Augustine says (Confessions Book 12, chapter 27), what a nest is to little birds not yet strong enough to fly, but a garden entirely covered with fruit trees, upon which they fly with joy from branch to branch. They perceive there hidden fruits; they sing while seeking them, and gather them with pleasure.*

When, for example, these faithful, thus enlightened and instructed, find that God says in Scripture: I am your God, who am jealous — this expression" (says the same Father, Against Adimantus, chapter 11) "fills them with a holy joy; because they understand that the jealousy God attributes to Himself signifies that providence and that will by which He does not permit any soul to separate itself from Him with

impunity, to abandon itself to the passions of this age, according to this word of the Prophet: You shall destroy, Lord, all these adulterous souls that separate themselves from you. For just as the anger attributed to God is not in Him a trouble of the soul, but the power He has to punish, so jealousy is not in Him that passion which torments a husband with regard to his wife, and a wife with regard to her husband; but an entirely tranquil and entirely perfect justice, which does not suffer that any soul should be happy, when it has let itself be corrupted by false sentiments and depraved desires, which could produce in it nothing but fruits of malediction and death. For those who have not yet understood that no human expressions can properly suit the incomprehensible and ineffable Majesty of God are touched by these terms, which represent in Him what they are capable of conceiving. They have, moreover, an extreme aversion to attributing to God the passions of men; and it seems to them that the respect they owe Him obliges them to abstain from this. Yet the Holy Spirit, making intelligent men understand, by these expressions, how inexplicable the divine properties and perfections are, has wished to employ terms that are customarily taken among men in a bad sense, and to signify defects, so as to warn them, by this conduct, that even when they think to speak of God in terms worthy of Him in some manner, these terms do not fail to be unworthy of Him; because it would belong rather to men to honour God by silence than by any expression of which they are capable. These sublime and heavenly thoughts are produced, in the faithful who have piety, by the means of their faith, though they read or hear expressions that may appear unworthy of God in their proper and natural significations.

Before passing to the second disposition, which is purity of heart, I ask all reasonable persons whether, in the Catholic Church, there are not at least as many women as men who have the faith, and who are instructed in the common truths of our Religion; and whether, ordinarily, women do not have more attachment to what they have once learned as being the faith of the Church, and less boldness to depart from it? There is, then, reason to believe that there is no more to fear for them than for men, that they might take Scripture in senses opposed to the faith they have received; and that, on the contrary, they will be more disposed to avow their ignorance, and to adore with respect what they would not understand, than to give it bad senses — since it suffices for this that they be firm in their faith (which is a grace God grants them as much as men), and that, on the other hand, they be persuaded that there is nothing in Scripture but what is true, which will oblige them to reject, as not being the true sense of what they read, all that will appear to them contrary to what the Church teaches. Why, then, would the Fathers have believed that Holy Scripture ought less to be read by girls and by women than by men? And how could M. Mallet have imagined that they regarded it as an abuse to let women read it — which we have shown to be a manifest falsehood?

One will say, perhaps, that at least one cannot deny that many poor people, craftsmen, peasants, and others, are badly instructed in the faith; from which it follows that, according to the very principles I have just established, not being in a state to read the Gospel nor the

Writings of the Apostles, one does well to forbid them this reading, as being dangerous to them. But who does not see that this is as if one said that, a great part of Christians being very ill-disposed to receive the Sacraments worthily, it would be fitting to make a prohibition against all those who are not in Holy Orders from approaching them more often than once a year, for fear they might commit sacrileges? For what ought one to answer to a proposition so unreasonable, except that, instead of making this prohibition, which, being general, could only be very unjust and altogether contrary to the spirit of the Church, one must remedy the cause that would serve as its pretext, by working to draw these ill-disposed Christians out of the bad state they are in, and meanwhile content oneself with excluding from participation in the Sacraments each of those whom, in particular, one would judge unworthy of it — resolving even, though with sorrow and groaning, to let them be profaned by those who would hide their unworthiness, rather than turn away from them, by ill-conceived precautions, those who, being worthy of it, might not wish, out of humility, to be excepted from the general rule.

It is the same here. It is only too true that a great many poor people are badly instructed in the faith, and know almost no truth of Religion. But are they not obliged to be instructed in it? Ought they not to know their Catechism? Are they incapable of learning it? They would then also be incapable of being saved, since one cannot be saved without knowing God and the principal truths of the faith. But it is not true that they are incapable of it. One sees them very well instructed in places where there are good Pastors who acquit themselves of their duty. And it is the fault of negligent Pastors that there are so many who pass their whole lives in a deplorable ignorance of the capital truths of Christianity. The Holy Fathers, then, did not believe one ought to forbid them the reading of Holy Scripture, by supposing that they were ignorant of the truths of the faith one learns in Catechisms — because, to suppose this, they would have had to believe either that they were not obliged to know them (which one cannot say without impiety), or that it is not an indispensable duty of those whom God has charged with the salvation of these poor people, as well as of the rich, to teach them to know their Creator, to love Him, and to serve Him — which is all these Saints judged necessary to be in a state to profit from the reading of the Gospel.

One acknowledges nonetheless that there may be some so stupid that one would not find them capable of it, though they knew enough of their Catechism to be saved. But as this is extraordinary, these Saints were right not to have regard to it; and thus, as in moral matters a rare exception does not prevent the generality of the rule, it would be to quibble with them, having only this to oppose to them, to find it wrong that they exhorted everyone to read Holy Scripture, expressly including, among those they exhorted to this reading, Ladies, young girls, the poor, craftsmen, shepherds, other rustic people, and servants.

Chapter XIII On the Second Disposition for Profiting from the Reading of Holy Scripture, Which Is Purity of Heart. That the Fathers Did Not Believe One Could Make Laws to Restrict the Liberty to Read It

Let us pass now to the other disposition, which is purity of heart; and after having seen what the pious Bishop, whose sentiments I have committed myself to reporting, has said of it, we shall judge whether it is not found as ordinarily in women and in the simplest minds as in men and the greatest minds.

"But it is necessary," says this Prelate, *"to join to sincerity of faith purity of heart, which is that key of David by which one must open the book of Holy Scripture, to see the secrets enclosed within it — just as, on the contrary, the defilements of covetousness close the heart to the light of the word of God."* Having proven this by a fine saying of Abbot Theodore in Cassian, which I omit for brevity, he joins to it this one from St. Bernard, in Sermon 62 on the Song of Songs: *"Truth does not show itself to impure souls; wisdom does not discover itself to them; truth cannot be seen by proud eyes; but it shows itself to those who are pure; truth cannot hide itself from a heart that is truly pure. One could recognize the truth of this doctrine in Gregory López, who lived holily in the sixteenth century in New Spain. This holy man, having learned neither Greek nor Latin, did not fail to obtain the grace of penetrating the most hidden senses of Holy Scripture; so that those who applied themselves to interpreting Scripture, and even the greatest Theologians, admired him, and he could say with the Royal Prophet: I have become more intelligent than all those who instructed me, because I meditate upon your law."*

"And because purity of heart, without which Holy Scripture is obscure, and with which it becomes clear as soon as one reads it, is a gift of God, it is necessary, to obtain this precious gift, not only to apply oneself to the mortification of one's passions and of oneself, but also to prayer, which obtains in a short time what it asks, when it is joined to the obedience one owes to the commandments of God. For, as St. Augustine says, in the book On the Work of Monks, chapter 17, God grants more promptly a single prayer of a man who obeys Him, than ten thousand prayers of a man who despises His law. If, before entering into the reading of Holy Scripture, we take care to ask God for purity of heart, saying to Him with the Royal Prophet: My God, create in me a pure heart, and renew the spirit of justice within me. Wash me more and more from the defilements of my iniquity, and purify me from my sin — it will be permitted us to hope to obtain this perfect purity, which we shall have asked for with a truly converted heart. And when we shall have obtained it, God will grant us the grace to open our mind, to make us understand Holy Scripture; to open our eyes, to make us consider the marvels of His law; to give us an understanding fit to penetrate the true sense of His word; but above all these graces, He will give us the will to keep His law with all our heart. For one must not read Holy Scripture so much to know the truths it contains, as to love with all our heart the justice it teaches, and to accomplish it through this love. This is

why St. Augustine says, in Book 2 of Christian Doctrine, chapter 9, that those who fear God, and who have the unction of piety, seek the will of God in all the books of Scripture, to adore it with a profound humility, to follow it with a faithful obedience, to observe it with a sincere love. For it belongs only to the Jews, and not to Christians, to know the will of God and not to love this divine will. And this knowledge alone could not procure a solid health for the soul; but it is fit only to cause it the swelling of vanity. If knowledge, says St. Augustine, Sermon 17 on Psalm 118, is greater than charity, it does not edify, but it puffs up. Now this swelling that pride produces closes the eyes of the soul to God, and prevents it from being enlightened by the understanding of His word. But on the contrary, he who, instructing himself in the will of God in His word, loves it and observes it, penetrates easily the senses and the secrets of Holy Scripture. For who does not know," says St. Augustine, in the book On the Work of Monks, chapter 17, *"that one profits all the more promptly from good readings, the more diligent one is in practising what they teach? Your commandments, Lord,"* says the Royal Prophet, *"have given me understanding — which signifies,"* says St. Jerome, *"that this holy Prophet had not begun to have the knowledge of the secrets of God, until after having been faithful in the observance of His law."*

Let us make here the same reflection on this last of the two dispositions necessary for reading Scripture with profit, that we made on the first. Will one say that women and other persons who have not studied are less capable than men and the learned of having this purity of heart, which gives entry into the truths of Scripture? This would be to combat both reason and experience. For it is true that women who have stripped themselves of all fear of God, to abandon themselves to their passions, are ordinarily more carried away than men. But it is not of these that we speak, any more than of men who are altogether libertine. One considers, in both sexes, those who have some sentiment of piety, or at least some desire to save themselves. For it is only with regard to this sort of person that one asks whether the Fathers judged it useful for them to read Holy Scripture. Now who is there who does not acknowledge that there are at least as many women as men who arrive at a very high degree of holiness, and who possess, consequently, this purity of heart in a very eminent degree? That there are as many Monasteries of girls who edify the Church by their piety, and by an exact observance of their rules, as there are of Religious men, though the latter are more numerous? That, stopping at a more ordinary virtue, it is still more certain that there are many more devout women than men, and that they are above all more devoted to prayer, by which these Saints teach us this purity of heart is acquired? And finally, that the knowledge one learns in the Schools, which one may say women lack, serves so little to put the soul in this state of purity and love, which makes one savour and love the truth, that it is rather an obstacle to it, as the most spiritual men of these recent times have often complained?

One ought not, then, to be astonished that the Holy Fathers, being filled with these views, and esteeming, of all these sciences, only that of Jesus Christ crucified — of which women and the ignorant are at least as capable as men who pass for learned in the world — did not think to find it wrong that these women and these ignorant persons should read Holy Scripture, and

that they should go there to seek, as well as the greatest minds, something to strengthen their faith and to sustain their piety.

And they were in no danger of stopping at the danger of finding there stumbling-blocks, which M. Mallet represents everywhere in so tragic a manner, as being a convincing reason not to let this sort of person read it. For they had too much judgment not to see that, if one had to have regard to this, it would have been rather to men and to the learned, than to women and the ignorant, that one ought to have forbidden this reading — since those who have abused it, and who have taken from it occasion to invent so many heresies, have been much more often men than women, and learned men than the ignorant.

How, then, would they have gone about not leaving all Christians the liberty to read Holy Scripture, and what bounds would they have given to these permissions, had they believed, as M. Mallet persuades himself, that they ought not to be general?

Would they have permitted this reading only to those already advanced in age, as the Jews did with regard to certain passages of the Old Testament? M. Mallet would very much like to make it believed that this is so, alleging often, to this design, this ordinance of the Jews. And this would be tolerable, if he understood it only of these same passages, which are not, as has already been said several times, the fiftieth part of the Bible. But for all the rest, and principally for the New Testament, they were so far from this thought, that they wished it to be the first study of Christian children, and that, as soon as they began to have a little discernment and reason, they should learn in these holy books to know and to love God.

Would they have forbidden it to women, as having a mind too weak for so solid a nourishment? But even supposing, which is at least very doubtful, that women in general have less openness of mind and natural intelligence than men in general, they would not have stopped at this reason to leave them less liberty to read Holy Scripture. For they knew, on the one hand, that it is no less the milk of children than the solid meat of the perfect, as we have seen they have often testified; and, on the other hand, that it is not natural intelligence, but the light of faith and purity of heart, that make one read with more profit these words of life, and that give more entry into this science of salvation. Thus, far from being on this point of M. Mallet's sentiment, they recommended nothing so much to Ladies, to widows, and to girls of every age, as not only to read, but even to learn by heart, these divine instructions of Jesus Christ, of the Apostles, and of the Prophets, and to make of it the most important occupation of their day.

Would they have judged that this was good only for persons altogether devout, who would no longer wish to have any part in the world, and not for those who, being burdened with wife and children, would be encumbered with the care of a household? They have maintained, on the contrary, that this is what ruined everything — that one imagined only Monks, and persons separated from the world, ought to read Holy Scripture; whereas, they say, this reading is not so necessary to them as to those who are more engaged in the world; because,

being every day exposed to so many combats, and receiving there so many wounds, they have much greater need of remedies.

Would they have used the distinction one has used since — of Scripture read in Hebrew, in Greek, or in Latin, and of Scripture read in the vernacular tongue — permitting the one and forbidding the other? M. Mallet acknowledges they did not, and he agrees that, if they had disapproved these general permissions to read Holy Scripture, which appear to him a great abuse, it would have been in finding it wrong that everyone should take the liberty of reading it, in whatever language it might be. In this he speaks truly — not for the reason he gives, which is that one did not then read Scripture in the vernacular tongue, but for an entirely opposite reason — which is that there was almost no one, not even the Priests and Bishops, who read it otherwise than in the vernacular tongue: that is, in Latin in the Churches of the West, in Greek in the Churches of almost all the East, and in Syriac, in Armenian, or in Coptic, in the Churches where we have shown, in the preceding Book, that public service was performed in those languages.

Finally, would they have restricted themselves to forbidding this reading to ill-disposed minds, who abuse it to their ruin, as St. Peter says? But it is certain they did not do this — because they were able to believe that, there being no necessity of forbidding, by a positive law, what is sufficiently forbidden by natural and divine right, there was, moreover, more evil than good to expect from this law. For there was, on the one hand, cause to fear that it might cause scruples to many good souls whom it would not have concerned, because, the more humble they were, the more capable they would have been of taking occasion from it to imagine such great dangers in this reading that it would have turned them away from it, and would thereby have deprived them of a great advantage for their advancement in piety; and there was not, on the other hand, cause to expect that this prohibition would have restrained these ill-disposed minds, against whom it would have been made — because the same pride and the same corruption that leads them to change into poison a nourishment so holy and so salutary in itself blinds them in such a manner that, far from fearing they might abuse it, they are persuaded they make the best use of it in the world. Or if they had gone so far into this impiety as to mock Scripture, and to seek there expressly something with which to combat and contradict it, the prohibition made to them against reading it would have been in no danger of stopping them, and would have served, on the contrary, only to irritate their spirit of libertinism, and to increase the inclination they would already have had to place themselves above all Laws.

I did not need all this discourse to confound M. Mallet. It was only a question, in this third Book, of a question of fact — namely, whether the Fathers had disapproved that every sort of person should read Holy Scripture: women as well as men, simple souls as well as the greatest minds, and those who have studied no human science as well as the learned. He maintained that they had regarded this general permission as an abuse, and I have maintained the contrary. It is a matter of inquiry. He has made his; and one has seen how he has succeeded in

it, having been able to cite only four Fathers, and one ancient Author who does not deserve that name, and having been able to report from them not a single passage that is not either falsely or impertinently alleged. I have made mine, on the contrary, and I claim no praise for it; for I acknowledge that these passages of the Fathers, which say expressly the exact opposite of what M. Mallet attributes to them, are almost all very common, and teach nothing new to any of the learned. But this is, as I have said, what ought to cause more astonishment with regard to the approvers of his book; nothing being more surprising than to see that not only have they let themselves be dazzled by M. Mallet's other absurdities, which appeared to them very curious researches, because they had never heard tell of them; but that they let pass so great a blunder, and made themselves guarantors of it by approbations full of praise.

One would also have some cause to complain of the public, which does not appear to have risen up as much as it ought against so scandalous a book, were it not that one learns that few capable people have deigned to read it, and that it has scarcely been seen until now except by certain ignorant persons of the party of bad morals, who, being infatuated with the good opinion they have of the Author, are not capable of recognizing his errors, and do not fail to give them currency among a fairly great number of persons little enlightened. But one hopes that the zeal of all those who truly love the Church will awaken, and that they will be well pleased to see her avenged of the injury this Author has done her, in attributing to her his extravagant pretensions, which tend to keep away from reading the holy Books all Christians who are not of the Clergy, as though these books had been written, according to the intention of God and of the Canonical Writers, only to be read by Priests and by Doctors. This paradox is so impious that one might have believed it enough to propose it in order to hold it in horror. But he has mixed with it, to sustain it, so many other reveries no less prejudicial to Religion and to the authority of the Canonical Scriptures, that I have believed I would render some service to the Church in destroying, from top to bottom, this whole heap of errors and visions, and in fortifying an infinity of good souls against the frights this Writer wishes to give them, in representing to them the book in the world most fitting to nourish and to increase in them what God has given them of faith and piety, as a dangerous book, which they cannot wish to read without great presumption. I ask no other recompense for this, except that they be grateful to me for it, that they offer me to God in their prayers, and that they obtain for me the grace to do holily, for all the rest of my life, what I have counselled them, after all the Fathers, as one of the greatest means of acquiring that holiness without which St. Paul assures us no one shall see God.

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